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MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

OF

ROBERT ROBINSON,

LATE PASTOR OF THE

BAPTIST CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

AT

CAMBRIDGE;

IN FOUR VOLUMES:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

BRIEF MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS.

VOL. I.

HARLOW:

PRINTED BY B. FLOWER,

FOR VERNOR, HOOD AND SHARPE, POULTRY; T. CONDER, BUCKLERSBURY; M. JONES, PATERNOSTER-ROW; M. GURNEY, HOLBORN, LONDON; AND J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE.

1807.

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OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

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PREFACE.

THIS collection of the Miscellaneous Works of the late ROBERT ROBINSON, *has been for some time expected by the public; it is unnecessary, however, to trouble the reader with the reasons that have occasioned a delay, which has been attended with greater inconvenience to the Editor than to any other person.*

In making this collection, I have endeavoured to observe the medium between publishing every thing, which, without regard to the reputation of the author, may, since his death, have appeared under his name, and omitting any thing I might judge to be worthy of his memory. Of three Sermons which have appeared in different publications, I have selected one only, the others being too incorrect for publication. When those who attempt to take down discourses, acknowledge that not only "many words, but whole sentences "escaped the writer," such incorrect effusions, ought in justice to the preacher, at least to be confined to the private circle.

Since these works were printed off, I have had two manuscript Sermons of our author put into my hands, which appear to have been correctly

reported; I have also heard that there are other manuscript sermons which were shewn to Mr. Robinson, and which he acknowledged to be correct. Whether any, or all of these will be published at a future period I cannot undertake to say. Should any persons have in their possession manuscripts of sermons, or other writings of Mr. Robinson's, and would favour me with a sight of them, I should deem myself much obliged; and would in no instance publish them without permission.

In the following MEMOIRS *the reader will perceive the use I have made of the MEMOIRS written by Mr. DYER, who collected almost every thing worthy of notice in the life of the author, and many things which had connection, however remote, either with him, his church, or his congregation: at the same time it will be observed that I widely differ from the industrious and ingenious biographer, in several of his opinions respecting both the character and the writings of Mr. Robinson. After the freedom with which Mr. Dyer has written, I am sure he will deem the apology for me sufficient:*—Amicus Plato; Amicus Socrates; sed magis amica veritas. *I have no farther apology to offer for remarks which appeared to me naturally to arise from the subject. Conscious of the purity of my motives, I have no favour to ask for my sentiments. They are intended to aid, however feebly, the cause of truth and virtue. If they are just, they demand*

attention; if the contrary, let them be refuted. I hope to possess, to the closing hour of life, that prime blessing of heaven,—a mind open to conviction.

The works of our author which do not appear in this collection are, the HISTORY OF BAPTISM, *and* ECCLESIASTICAL RESEARCHES, *two large quarto volumes; the translation of* CLAUDE'S ESSAY ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON, *with notes, two large octavo volumes; and his* VILLAGE SERMONS. *These distinct works, are in print; and neither of them could be admitted in the present collection without swelling it to a size inconvenient in many respects. Several of the pieces now re-published, have long been out of print; and a considerable part of the fourth volume consists of Letters from the original manuscripts.*

I beg leave to return my sincere thanks to the Relatives and Friends of the author, for their obliging communications, and for their industry in procuring subscribers. I would with pleasure be more particular, but lest I should omit the name of any one to whom I am under obligations, I hope this general acknowledgment will be accepted.

B. F.

Harlow, Jan 20, 1807.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

ROBERT ROBINSON.

MEMOIRS &c.

IT has been justly remarked, that the biography which attracts general admiration, is that of the man whose life has been spent in an elevated station, or whose actions have dazzled the eyes of the multitude, whilst that of the retired man, the philosopher, or the christian, however useful it may have been, presents but little deemed worthy of notice. Whilst, however, senates are employed in bestowing public honours to the memory of men, whose characters, whatever partial qualities they may have possessed, will by no means bear the inspection of reason or religion; yea of men who may have been permitted by Providence to be the scourges of their country and of the human race, those persons surely are not less usefully employed, who hold up to the world the lives of men distinguished, not only for their talents, but for their virtues; whose writings tend to improve the understanding and to ameliorate the heart, and whose example confirmed the truth and enforced the importance of their instructions: such a man was the author of the works collected in these volumes, and whose memory it may be safely affirmed, will be held in veneration, when that of many whom the world *delighteth to honour*, will be held in *shame and everlasting contempt.*

Mr. Robert Robinson was born on the 8th. of October, 1735, at Swaffham in the county of Norfolk.* His father Mr. Michael Robinson, a native of Scotland, was an exciseman; his mother was the daughter of Mr. Robert Wilkin, of Mildenhall, Suffolk; a man of respectability in private life, and in possession of a moderate independence. He married a widow by whom he had two children, Robert and Mary. Mrs Wilkin brought into the family two children by a former husband, on whom their father in law bestowed a good education, and towards whom he discovered so much partiality as to cause uneasiness to the other branches of the family; a consequence too frequently resulting from that, in general, undesirable domestic connection, a second marriage. Mr. Robinson's parents were both of them members of the church of England, and their children were educated in the principles of the establishment. Mary Wilkin, Mr. Robinson's mother, was beautiful in her person, amiable in her manners, and her father bestowed on her, so far as related to the cultivation of her understanding, a good education; but his partiality to his wife's former children, and his rejecting several respectable persons who had solicited the hand of his daughter Mary, rendered her so unhappy at home, that at length she, against her father's consent, married a person in an inferior station,

* Mr. Dyer states Mr. Robinson's birth day to have been the 8th. of *January*, which, from the account given me by the relatives of the deceased, is a mistake.

whose disposition and habits of life were not the best calculated to render her happy, and whose unkindness to his wife was increased by the unkindness of his father in law. How careful should parents be to cultivate not only the understandings, but the affections of their children, and to render their home in their younger years so happy, that in forming the most important connection, a connection for life, they may naturally turn to those who have given them birth, and who have *nourished and brought them up*, as to their most intimate counsellers, and best friends.

Mr. Robinson was the youngest of three children; his brother was apprenticed to a painter, and his sister to a mantua-maker: he was sent to a latin school at the age of six years, where he made so considerable a proficiency, that his master soon became very fond of him, observing that he never before knew a child who discovered such a capacity. His father was now ordered in the course of his profession from Swaffham to Scarning in the same county, where being uneasy in his circumstances, he left the place, his family remaining at home, and he shortly after died at Winchester.

At Scarning young Robinson was sent to an endowed grammer school then under the care of the Rev. Joseph Brett. Several persons of eminence received their education at the same school, and amongst others the late Lord Thurlow. Mrs. Robinson, however, in consequence of the unkind

treatment of her father, and her own narrow circumstances, was unable after a few years to pay the expences of her son's education; but the master being much attached to his pupil, and respecting the mother on account of her virtues and afflictions, continued him in the school, and instructed him gratis.

At this school young Robinson early discovered those powers by which he was afterwards so highly distinguished. There appears to have been a mutual respect between the master and the scholar, the former gave due encouragement and commendation, and the latter strove to excell in those branches of learning in which he was educated. He gained a considerable knowledge of the french as well as of the classical languages: he wrote a good hand, but as is too frequently the case at grammar schools, was defective in his knowledge of arithmetic, a branch of education which in all situations, ought not to be neglected.

At the age of fourteen, Mrs. Robinson was desirous of placing out her son as an apprentice. Mr. Brett endeavoured to procure him a situation suited to his talents and disposition; but his plan failing, young Robinson was bound to a Mr. Anderson, hair-dresser, in Crutched Friars, London. Although he appears to have been for a time, tolerably industrious at his trade, yet his love of literature shortly convinced his master, that hair-dressing, shaving, and wig-making, were not his *forte*. I have been informed that when out on

business, he would frequently return with his pockets loaded with old books purchased from different stalls: he would generally be at his books by four or five in the morning; this practice of early rising grew into a habit: in after life he could not only preach excellently and eloquently on the subject, as in his Village Exercises, but what is not always the case with preachers, his instructions were constantly enforced by his example. It is not improbable that this habit was acquired from his mother, who, even at the age of upwards of eighty used to rise at four in the morning. Mr. Robinson never appears to have been ashamed of his employment in early life; it was not unfrequently the subject of his conversation: this was one proof of his genuine good sense: the aristocratical airs of some in the middle class of life, the sneers frequently indulged against respectable persons on account of their trade, are equally irrational and unchristianlike, and are to men who have just ideas of the natural dignity and equality of mankind, peculiarly disgusting.

Robert Robinson, appears during his apprenticeship to have imbibed serious impressions of religion. He occasionally attended the most celebrated preachers of the day amongst the Independents, Baptists, the clergy termed Evangelical, and the Methodists. Drs. Guise, and Gill, Messrs. Romaine, and Whitfield, appear to have been his favourites. Mr. Dyer has presented us with various extracts from Robinson's Diary,

which it appears he kept during his apprenticeship, and which being remarkable for nothing but their enthusiasm, must surely have been the inferior parts of it: as they might as well have remained in the original manuscript, the reader will not censure me for passing them over as unworthy notice.

Mr. Robinson does not appear during his residence in London, to have joined himself as a member to any particular church, but frequently communicated with the methodists in Mr. Whitfield's connection: at the age of nineteen, he, encouraged by others, had some view to the ministerial office: amongst other methods he made use of to prepare himself for speaking in public, he would occasionally preach for an hour together to himself; and it is not an improbable conjecture, that this was one mean by which he acquired that admirable mode of delivering his discourses, which in the opinion of Dr. Price, rendered him, in this respect, without an equal: his connection with the methodists was not without its use: Mr. Whitfield was, at times, happy both in the manner and the matter of his pulpit addresses. Never in my youthful days was I so much impressed as by some of his sermons; and when we consider the usefulness of his laborious life, and the multitudes of persons, both in this kingdom and in America, who were converted from Satan unto God, and from vice to virtue under his ministry, what a lesson for humility does it not

inculcate on the sons of science, whose superior parts and learning might induce them to despise the rambling methodist;* at the same time it must be lamented, that so many preachers since his day, have, without his abilities, studiously copied his defects. Mr. Robinson instead of vitiating, appears to have improved his pulpit taste by his methodistical connections: notwithstanding the popularity of his address, his discourses were well connected, and, except in a few instances in his Village Sermons, and which, from local circumstances might scarcely be deemed improper, were free from any thing bordering on the mean, the vulgar, or the trifling.

Although Mr. Robinson had a considerable degree of respect and affection for Mr. Whitfield, whom he used to style his spiritual father, it appears that even at his first setting out in the religious world, he had learned that important lesson which his life and writings so forcibly inculcate—*Call no man master or father upon earth;* for on his leaving his trade, when he was about twenty years of age, he, somewhat to the surprise of Mr. Whitfield, was shortly found preaching amongst the methodists. His first sermon was addressed to a small congregation at

* Dr. Watts, it is reported, when he was informed of the success which attended the preaching of Mr. Whitfield, exclaimed to some of his learned brethren—"His wild notes "produce greater effect than our regular music."

Mildenhall in Suffolk: he was soon after invited to preach at the Tabernacle, in Norwich, and at several places in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire: his sermons were not unfrequently preached with little, and sometimes without any preparation: he delivered them extempore, which method he observed to the close of his pulpit labours.

Mr. Robinson continued preaching amongst the methodists for about two years, during which period he appears to have turned his attention more particularly to the controversy between the members of the established church and the dissenters, and to have resolved to take his lot with the latter. A temptation to join the former, too powerful for any but a man of christian integrity to repel, presented itself: "A rich relation who had "promised to provide liberally for him, and who "had bequeathed him a considerable sum in his "will, threatened to deprive him of every advan- "tage which he had been encouraged to expect, "unless he quitted his connection with the dis- "senters: but the rights of conscience, and the "approbation of God, were superior, in his re- "gard, to every worldly consideration: he pre- "served his integrity, steadily maintained his "principles, and persevered in his connection "with the dissenters; but forfeited the favour of "his relation, and every advantage which, living "or dying, he had in his power to bestow."*

* Funeral Sermon for Mr. Robinson, by Dr. Rees. Page 59.

Shortly after leaving the methodists, Mr. Robinson formed a small independent calvinistic church at Norwich, during his connection with which, he administered infant baptism; but on his leaving this church, he relinquished the practice, and became an antipædobaptist: his opinion, in this respect, he firmly, although without bigotry, retained to the close of life: he was baptised by immersion, at Ellingham in Norfolk.

In the spring of the year 1759, he received an invitation to preach to a small congregation of Baptists at Cambridge, but continued for prudential reasons for two years on probation before he settled: about the same time he entered the marriage state with Miss Ellen Payne, to whom he had paid his addresses during his residence at Norwich.

Mr. Robinson on his settlement was ordained according to the customary mode amongst the dissenters: his confession of faith, consisted merely of a string of calvinistical opinions expressed in the usual common place language: its peculiar excellence is its brevity; the delivery of it was however followed by some observations of much greater consequence than the mere confession: after reading it he remarked, that "these appeared scripture "truths; that where any of them surpassed his "comprehension, his reason did homage to reve-"lation: that in this there was nothing done but

" what a naturalist did every time he studied a " daisy: that he intended however in his future " ministry to dwell on the *least disputable*, as " they were the *most essential* truths of religion." How much is it to be lamented that the spirit of these observations is not deeply imbibed by every christian minister, and more particularly on his entrance on the pastoral office.

Mr. Dyer informs us that Mr. Robinson afterwards entered into an explanation of the articles of his confession in an essay on *Moderate Calvinism*, which essay so late as the year 1794, was in the possession of the family, and which " discovers " considerable ingenuity, and no small share of " learning." After making of Mr. Dyer, and of the different branches of Mr. Robinson's family, every inquiry in my power respecting the essay alluded to, I regret to say, I have not been able to obtain any further information respecting it.

The congregation at Cambridge on Mr. Robinson's first settlement was in all respects, in a very low state: it is described by himself at an after period of his life as follows:—

" The settlement of Robinson seems rather a " romantic, than a rational undertaking: for this " pastor was to be maintained. He had not re- " ceived above ten guineas from his own family for " some years: he had no future prospect of re- " ceiving any: his grandfather had cut him off with " a legacy of half a guinea. He had received only " an hundred pounds with his wife, and this he

" had diminished among the methodists. He had " never enquired what this congregation would " allow him, nor had any body proposed any thing. " They had paid him, for the first half year, 3l. " 12s. 5d. they had increased since, but not enough " to maintain him frugally; there was no prospect " of so poor a people supplying him long, especi- " ally should his family increase, which it was " likely to do. Besides, the congregation, through " the libertinism of many of its former members, " had acquired a bad character. These would " have been insurmountable difficulties to an older " and a wiser man: but he was a boy, and the " love of his flock was a million to him. His set- " tlement, therefore, on this article should be no " future precedent for future settlements." In a note he adds, " the support of this church, has al- " ways been by a quarterly voluntary subscription " paid to the deacons. During the first years of " his ministry the annual income kept increasing " from the small beginning mentioned to 25, 30, " 35, 40, 50l, in succeeding years; and about " the year 1770, it amounted to upwards of 90l. " since that year it has decreased, and of late in- " creased again. The perpetual changes of the " subscribers by deaths, removals, &c. have al- " ways rendered the income so variable, that it " has never been two years together the same."

Mr. Robinson on his settlement at Cambridge, resided, with a member of his congregation at Fulbourn, a village about five miles distant; where

he became acquainted with Mr. Graves, a gentleman of considerable property, and a member of the university, who in the circle of his connections, expressed his high admiration of Mr. Robinson's talents and virtues, noticing particularly his benevolence to the poor: he shortly removed from Fulbourn to Hauxton a village about the same distance from Cambridge on the London road. Here he lived several years in an humble cottage, his family increasing, and his means of support so scanty, that he could with difficulty have procured the common necessaries of life without the occasional assistance of friends. That excellent man the late John Thornton Esq. whose benevolence was unbounded, appears to have conferred on him some pecuniary favours, and to have made him one of his numerous almoners. Mr. Wallin the late much respected pastor of the Baptist church at Maze Pond, Southwark, whose friendship for Mr. Robinson ended but with his life, likewise rendered him occasional services. In his retired situation at Hauxton, Mr. Robinson was most sedulously engaged in the pursuit of his studies, in fulfilling the duties of the pastoral office, and, in what he peculiarly excelled, village preaching: there were indeed few villages in the county where his labours were not exercised, and attended with uncommon success. His condescension to the poor, even to children, and his endeavours to promote their temporal and spiritual welfare, made him almost their idol. In some of his cottage visits during his after residence

at Chesterton, I have had the happiness of forming one of the company, and have been equally entertained and instructed. How edifying and interesting was the sight of a great man, who had for his intimate friends the most learned members of one of the first universities in the world, sitting with his pipe in the chimney corner of a cottager, conversing in a manner the most peculiarly adapted to please and to improve. His labours were indeed *more abundant*: besides his statedly preaching on the Sabbath, twice, sometimes three times, he preached several lectures on the week days, not only in the evening, but at six in the morning; at the same time taking care that these exercises should not interfere with the necessary labours of the poor, as he discontinued his lectures on the week days during the hay and harvest seasons.

In his village preaching he was both encouraged and assisted by the late Mr. Berridge, some time senior fellow of Clare Hall, and afterwards Vicar of Everton, in Bedfordshire, a clergyman of respectable abilities, and much beloved, particularly by the calvinistic methodists; a laborious and useful preacher, who was very successful in raising and establishing various dissenting congregations, not only in his own, but in neighbouring counties. "His master Jesus Christ," he used to say, "employed him to serve near forty *shops* "in the country besides his own parish." Although within the pale of the establishment he had not a particle of the churchman about him:

concerning his evangelical high church brethren he would frequently in his homely dialect exclaim —" Such an one will do little good, he has too " much of the steeple in his belly." Mr. Robinson however as he advanced in life, had too little methodism in him for the old gentleman, and he gradually became less a favourite : " he knew," to use his own language, " how to estimate his good " qualities, without making himself a simpleton." Mr. Rowland Hill, and Mr. Charles De Coetlogon were likewise at their setting out in life, Mr. Robinson's associates : the latter continued his intimacy with the dissenters, till he was appointed chaplain to a lord mayor of London, when he thought proper to join the high church party, and preached a furious sermon against the repeal of the Test act, in which he reviled the dissenters, and bitterly attacked their civil and religious rights. This, it may be remarked, is not the only instance in which the evangelical clergy (as they are usually termed) after *eating the bread* of dissenters, and experiencing their warmest friendship, have *lift up the heel against them.*

From a number of letters which have lately been put into my hands written by Mr. R.* it seems evident that almost at the outset of his public life he entertained just and enlarged sentiments of civil and religious liberty, and a detestation and contempt of Priestcraft, as it appears in a greater or

* Vol. iv. p. 292—304.

less degree, not only in established churches but in those who dissent from them: the letters referred to will afford the reader additional evidence how utterly unfounded are the assertions of his former biographer, that "with simplicity of manners, he "united a little professional cant: the latter he "could practice on occasion, as well as most men."* The incontrovertible fact however is, that no man was ever more free from "professional cant" himself, or more despised and ridiculed it in others, than Mr. Robinson. Perhaps, however, by men of a sceptical turn of mind, expressions of fervent love to God, and to Christ, and of regard to the eternal interests of mankind, may be denominated "cant." If so Mr. Robinson, it must be confessed, was as subject as most men to such a charge.

The congregation at Cambridge experienced in a few years after the settlement of their pastor such an increase both in numbers and respectability, as to render a larger and more commodious place of worship indispensibly necessary: the old meeting house was pulled down, and a new one erected at the expence of the congregation: their pastor felt great satisfaction at their conduct, as he had an aversion to a society involving itself in debt, or depending on others for assistance.† In mentioning

* Dyer's Memoirs. p. 52.

† It is to be lamented that a spirit of independence, as well as an attention to economy are not more visible in country congregations. What occasion is there for the unnecessary and

the Trust deed, Mr. Robinson observes, " the sub-" scribers and purchasers, as well as the present " trust, aimed at no dominion, and will submit to " no slavery. They did all they could to secure " the same independency to their successors, and " wished to inspire them with a just terror of that " worst of all animals, a lord brother." An animal we may remark, equally disgusting, whether cloathed in a lay, or a clerical habit.

In the year 1770, Mr. Robinson printed a translation of two or three sermons of Mons. Saurin, which were intended as a specimen of a larger number: these were reprinted together with others a few years afterwards: and which will be noticed in the order they were published. In 1772 he published *A sermon preached to a society of young people at Willingham in Cambridgeshire on the Nature and Necessity of early piety:* although this discourse, as a composition, is by no means equal to several of his succeeding ones, yet for its ingenuity and practical piety, and for the learning discovered in the notes, it affords a favourable specimen of the peculiar talents of the author: a second edition was

proud distinction of *pews*, in a place where all profess to be on an equality before God, the children of one common father, and the disciples of one common redeemer. Seats with backs are sufficient for comfortable accommodation; and were this method followed in building meeting houses, one third of the expence might be saved, and the congregations would be less burthensome to others, and more independent themselves, than they too frequently are. People who must have *pews* ought never to go a begging to others to erect them.

published at Bristol. This was shortly followed by his *Arcana, or the Principles of the late petitioners to Parliament for relief in matter of subscription in eight letters to a friend.* This was written at a period when dissenting ministers and schoolmasters were by law required to subscribe thirty six, and part of a thirty seventh, of the thirty nine articles of the established church; but as the generality of them, to their honour, had long refused to submit to this unjust requisition, their situation was somewhat precarious: after two appeals in which the bill for their relief, although it passed the Commons, was, owing to the opposition of the bishops rejected by the Lords, they made a third appeal which proved successful, and the bill passed both houses without opposition.*

* See that fine Apostrophe to Liberty, on the rejection of the Bill in the house of Lords, in *The History and the Mystery of Good Friday.* Vol III. p. 183, 184.

The conduct of the Bishops on the occasion alluded to affords a curious illustration of the insincerity, and the suppleness of the episcopal order. They had *twice* represented the relief solicited by the dissenters as dangerous to the interests of both *Church* and *State*, and the dissenting ministers as "men of "close ambition, not to be trusted." On the third application it appeared that their lordships had only acted throughout the whole of the business, as they were directed by certain great men. One of the Archbishops frankly confessed—"They were (speaking in the name of his right reverend bre-"thren) all the time the friends of the dissenters, but were "PUT ON by others to act as they had done." See *Dr. Priestley's Letters to Mr. Burke.*

A considerable number of the most respectable members of the church of England about the same time applied for similar relief, but notwithstanding reason and religion most forcibly supported their claims, they were rejected by a large majority of the commons. A declaration of *unfeigned assent and consent to* ALL *and* EVERY THING contained in the articles and the book of Common Prayer, is to this day the indispensible condition of entering the church; a declaration which it is hardly possible to conceive any clergyman, if he thinks at all about the matter, can make with common sincerity. The *Arcana* embracing the various topics arising out of the controversy, contains a forcible vindication of the rights of conscience. The manner in which it is written is truly original; a few quaint expressions may occasionally be found, but seldom has a piece appeared on the subject, in which wit and argument are so happily blended. This work procured for its author much respect from the most eminent men amongst the dissenters. The late Dr. Furneaux, famed for his learning and his masterly letters on *Toleration*, expressed his admiration of both the performance and the writer. Mr. Daniel Turner, of Abingdon, in Berkshire, a most respectable Baptist minister, in whom it may be truly said orthodoxy and charity were united, and whose friendship for our author remained unshaken, speaks of the work alluded to, in the following terms:—"When I was informed that "the *Arcana* was written by a Baptist minister,

"I replied no; it cannot be; we have not one "amongst us who can write such a book as the "*Arcana*."

In June 1773, Mr. Robinson removed from Hauxton to Chesterton, a pleasant village by the river side, about two miles from Cambridge. His family now consisted of a wife, nine children, and an aged mother. One of his children died at Hauxton in infancy. Neither his income, nor the produce of his literary labours were sufficient to provide for the necessary wants of so large a family; he therefore turned his thoughts to other pursuits. In the course of two or three years he was engaged in various agricultural concerns; made several purchases of copyhold houses and lands, and was much employed in alterations and improvements; he hired the ferry adjoining his house, and would frequently employ himself in ferrying passengers across the river: he was also a considerable dealer in coals and corn. His agricultural and mercantile pursuits were it should seem in general succesful, as he maintained his family in reputation, and left behind him some property: although he received at different times pecuniary favours from friends, their total amount, in addition to his stated income, and the profits arising from his literary concerns were by no means adequate to the support of his family.

It is not my design nor will my limits allow me to enter into further particulars of Mr. Robinson's secular employments. How some of his days

were spent may be learned from a curious letter written to one of his most intimate friends:* and with respect to his various pursuits during the major part of his life, Mr. Dyer has so happily expressed himself, that I cannot refrain from presenting his sentiments in his own language.

"It would be no less agreeable, than instructive, to survey Robinson's rural economy, and domestic arrangements in his new situation: the versatility of his genius was uncommon; and whether he was making a bargain, repairing an house, stocking a farm, giving directions to workmen, or assisting their labours, he was the same invariable man, displaying no less vigour in the execution of his plans, than ingenuity in their contrivance. The readiness with which he passed from literary pursuits to rural occupations, from rural occupations to domestic engagements, from domestic engagements to the forming of plans for dissenting ministers, to the settling of churches, to the solving of cases of conscience, to the removing of the difficulties of ignorant, or the softening of the asperities of quarrelsome brethren, was surprising."

Mr. Robinson in spite of the prejudices cherished too generally in the christian world, justly concluded, that engaging in secular concerns so far from being dishonourable to a minister of the gospel was, in certain circumstan-

* Vol. IV p. 231.

ces, truly honourable. His sentiments on this subject, which it is to be lamented are not more prevalent, may be seen in a letter to one of his brethren of the ministry.* To the censures which certain *clericals* passed on his conduct he disdained a serious reply. "Godly boobies," he would exclaim, "too idle, many of them, to work, "too ignorant to give instruction, and too con- "ceited to study, spending their time in tattling "and mischief,—are these the men to direct my "conduct, to censure my industry?"

It is indeed truly surprising that any man should dare to censure a christian teacher who works with his *own hands*, in order that he may *provide things honest in the sight of all men*, and obtain an honourable independence.

But it may perhaps be objected, that a minister by engaging in secular employments may render himself unfit for the duties of his pastoral office; in answer to which we will venture to ask—What duties? Will any one say that an hour or two daily spent in reading and studying, would not be sufficient to enable a christian teacher to address his congregation in a manner well calculated to promote their edification. Judging not merely from my own observation, but from that of others, I may affirm there are ministers in country villages, who might in such circumstances address, without suffering shame, even a London audience, at

* Vol. IV. p. 246.

the famous *Merchants' Lecture in Broad Street*, or at a *Monthly meeting*, surrounded as they may be, by their reverend fathers, and their church officers. As to visiting, is there any thing in the common concerns of life to render a christian less qualified for social intercourse? On the contrary, may not such intercourse, if conducted with prudence, be rendered by an increased knowledge of the world, additionally pleasant and profitable?

It seems to be universally allowed, that there is one secular employment, if honestly attended to a most laborious one, which is not thought derogatory to the character of a minister; I mean that of a schoolmaster. Why are not the various commercial or mechanical occupations in which mankind are usually engaged, equally honourable?

To add weight to these remarks, let any one attend to the situation of numbers of our dissenting ministers, who with large families, and small incomes, are reduced to a state of indigence and dependence, from which result consequences peculiarly unhappy. There are cases, in which a minister dare not think for himself, or utter his sentiments on subjects of importance with that freedom they demand, lest he should offend some wealthy subscriber. In others, a society may make every exertion to manifest respect and affection for their pastor; occasional assistance from friends and public institutions may aid those exertions; and yet, after all, the minister remains destitute of the comforts, and scarcely possesses the

necessaries of life. How many instances are there in the established church, and amongst the different denominations of dissenters, in which a minister is, owing to the sentiments instilled into him at the college, or the academy, and his subsequent habits of life, reduced to the unhappy situation of the unjust steward? He *cannot dig, and to beg he is ashamed!*

It is readily acknowledged, that caution and prudence, are peculiarly necessary to be exercised by a minister who may be engaged in secular concerns; but have we not a right to expect, that he who is an instructor of others, should enforce his instructions by his own example? But as we are all so much the creatures of education or habit, it is greatly to be lamented, that young men who have a view to the ministerial work should be instructed to consider themselves as beings of a *sacred order*, above the employments of common life; whereas the necessity which may probably exist of their maintaining themselves, in part at least, by other labours than the ministerial, ought, by their tutors more especially, to be carefully instilled into their minds. How few are there who can expect to be settled with congregations that can adequately support a minister with a family, or to meet with that prize in the lottery of life so anxiously sought after by some—a rich wife; who may not, however, always be remarkable for her *good understanding*, her *beautiful countenance*,*

* 1 Sam. xxv. 3.

or the qualities which alone produce and perpetuate domestic felicity.* Instead of indulging in such speculations, how much more would it be acting in character as a man and a christian, to

* I am sorry to find such a man as the late excellent Mr. *Job Orton*, encouraging this kind of speculation in a letter to a young minister, of which the following is an extract.

" I hear Mr. ——— has a very agreeable sister, whose " charms have attracted your attention, and perhaps affections " too. I am a perfect stranger to the whole family, but if " my information be right, that she hath little or no fortune, " I cannot think that such an alliance will be prudent, espe- " cially as you have so little of your own, and perhaps are " not remarkable for economy. There is an old rule which I " remember in the grammar that deserves your attention : " Duo negativa plerumque vehementius negant. You will " therefore think, and think again before you pursue such a " scheme ; especially as you may reasonably expect, *consi-* " *dering your education, profession, and station, that you may* " *meet with a wife with a handsome fortune, as many other dis-* " *senting ministers have done.*"

Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers; 2 vols. 12*mo.*— *Letter to Mr. Hughes.*

Although I do not wish to insinuate, that prudential motives are to be disregarded in forming the conjugal relation ; yet I beg leave to express my opinion, that when persons enter the marriage state, from motives of pure affection founded on mutual esteem, and a firm conviction that they are formed to render each other happy, they, with whatever trials it may please Providence to visit them, generally, if not always, experience a rich remuneration in the delights which spring from an union of hearts, and an ardent, habitual inclination to share each others cares and pleasures, by which the former are divided and the latter are doubled. On the contrary, how many have felt to their cost, that the grand ingredient recommended by Mr. Orton, has not produced

have in view the admonitions and the example of the great Apostle Paul, who although possessed of titles, office, and authority, to which no modern teacher can possibly lay a just claim, so far from deeming secular employments a degradation of his character, appears to glory in his being able thus to address his fellow labourers:—*I have coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel. Yea you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring, you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.——Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travel; for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.——You*

conjugal felicity. Let young men in general, and young ministers in particular, be therefore warned, that in the choice of a wife, when pure affection, that affection which prefers the person chosen to all other persons in the universe, is wanting, marriage in the sight of God is no better than legal prostitution; and happiness cannot rationally be expected to follow. All that the parties can at best experience is a pitiful mediocrity of happiness. God is the God of order; and it is impossible that without the purest affection, those relative dispositions can be exercised, and those relative duties can be practised, which are so affectionately, and powerfully enforced in many parts of the sacred writings.—See PROV. v. 18, 19. EPH. v. 22—33.

yourselves know how you ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travel night and day that we might not be chargeable to any of you; not because we have not power, [or authority] *but to make ourselves an ensample to you that ye should follow us.**

With these sentiments respecting the *employments* of christian ministers, Mr. Robinson was in a similar manner distinguished for his sentiments respecting the nature of their *office*, their *titles* and their *dress*. All the members of a christian church he considered as perfectly equal in religious rights; and was firmly of opinion, that whenever they chose to delegate any portion of their joint authority to a pastor, or other church officers, such officers were to be considered, not as governors, or masters, acquiring dominion, in matters of doctrine or discipline, but as servants of the church, possessed of their office in trust, for the good of the whole, to be regulated, limited, or resumed at pleasure. "Any person who understands christianity may teach it," is the title of one of his Village Discourses, in which, as well as in many other parts of his works he argues, that five persons assembling in a parlour, a cottage, or

* See—The Apostle Paul's disinterested, noble, and affectionate parting address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, recorded in Acts xx. See also 1. Thess. ii. 8—11. 2. Thess. iii. 7—10.

a barn, have an equal right to form themselves into a church, as five hundred assembled in a building appointed for the sole purpose of public worship; that the people are by right the only judges of the qualifications of their teachers, and that their expressed choice constitutes the only essential ordination, the mode of expressing such choice being left by Jesus Christ (who never promulgated any law upon the subject) to the exercise of christian prudence, and christian charity, in all future ages of the world, with a view to edification; a right in the exercise of which no man or body of men have an iota of authority to dictate or interfere. The language of our Lord on this grand subject of christian equality is so explicit, that it is surprising how any honest, impartial christian can possibly misunderstand it. *Ye know that the princes of this world exercise dominion, and they that are great exercise authority: but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.—The Scribes and the Pharisees love to be called of men Rabbi; but be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon earth, for one is your father which is in heaven: neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant: and whoever shall exalt himself shall be*

abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. The promise of our Lord's presence is made not only to the numerous but to the smallest congregation of christians. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.* The assemblies of primitive christians were frequently held in private houses; and Paul in his Epistle to Philemon sends his salutation *to the church in his house.* Thus the New Testament, and the practice of the primitive christians in the purest ages of the church, prove the truth of our author's opinions on these important subjects.

The pompous *titles* assumed by christian miniters of almost every church and sect, were to Mr. Robinson the subject of equal dislike and ridicule. "I wonder," said he, in a letter to a friend, "any "man should be so silly as to call me *Reverend.*" The titles to which the *sacred order* have laid claim, such as—"Levites holy to the Lord—Am- "bassadors of the King of Kings, Administrators "of the New Covenant—Stewards of the mysteries "of the gospel," were in his opinion, solely applicable to those whose offices under the Jewish dispensation were of divine appointment, or who under the christian dispensation were the subjects of divine inspiration: and indeed, we have a right to demand of the christian teachers who claim these titles—*By what authority* dost thou make this claim, and *who gave thee this authority?* Is not the epithet of *Reverend* claimed by the Deity

equally with that of *Holy?* Has the pastor of a Dissenting church who arrogates this epithet, a right to complain of the bishop of Rome for arrogating the attribute of "*holiness*"? An uninspired teacher has no message to deliver from God to man; he can only explain and enforce the message which the heavenly ambassadors, the inspired apostles delivered to the world, the truth and importance of which explanation and exhortation, it is equally the right and the duty of those to whom they are addressed to judge of for themselves. That there are no divine *mysteries* committed to the stewardship of an uninspired teacher is evident by the language of the Apostle Paul addressed to the Ephesians. *For this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ to you gentiles: if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you ward; how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words, whereby* WHEN YE READ YE MAY UNDERSTAND MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST, *which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is* NOW REVEALED *unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit, &c.*—The invaluable book which contains an ample revelation of those divine mysteries, which kings and prophets under the old Testament dispensation earnestly desired to behold, is, blessed be God, equally open to all ranks and degrees, from the prince to the peasant, from the philosopher to the illiterate; and it is the

duty and the privilege of the poorest and the meanest christian to read, examine, and to judge of the contents for himself, without applying for permission to any fancied, self-denominated "steward," of any sect in the christian church.*

* Mat. chap. xx. 25—27.—xxiii. 7—12. "*Call not any "one on earth your father.* The Pharisees no doubt had this "title given them, and Bishop Wilkins observes, that it is a "title which assuming *priests* of all religions have greatly af- "fected.—*One is your master even Christ.* It is remarkable "that this occurs twice in the very same words. (ver. 8 & 10.) "Our Lord knew how requisite it would be FOR US to at- "tend to it, and how ready EVEN HIS MINISTERS would "be to forget it.—*Whosever shall exalt himself, &c.* Christ "seems by the frequent repetition of this maxim to intimate, "that he intended it, not only for those who were *to be* "*teachers of others*, but for *all his disciples* without excep- "tion: and it is well worthy our observation, that no one "sentence of our Lord's is so frequently repeated as this; "which occurs at least *ten times* in the Evangelists."

Doddridge's Family Expositor.

Bishop Warburton observes that—"To claim rule or mas- "tery in matters of religion on mere human authority, shews "so much impudence, and to acknowledge the claim such "egregious folly, that one could hardly conceive any man "who had been delivered from the bondage of corruption "into the glorious liberty of the children of God, should be "in danger either of assuming it himself, or submitting to it "when assumed by others."

Warburton's Works 4to. Vol. I. p. 144.

For Mr. Robinson's sentiments on the subjects referred to, see more particularly the 1st. 9th. 16th. and 17th. of his *Village Sermons:* his *Discourses addressed to the church at Maze Pond, on the settlement of Mr. Dore*, and at the *Ordination of Mr. Birley, at St. Ives: Works. Vol.* IV. Preface to the 3d.

With respect to the *dress* of christian ministers, Mr. Robinson had an utter dislike to the gown,

and 5th. Vol. of Saurin's Sermons: *Works, Vol.* I. Similar sentiments abound in his writings in general.

I cannot help in this place remarking the contrary sentiments which prevail amongst some of our modern dissenters, and which afford too evident proof how little they understand either of primitive christianity, or the genuine principles of nonconformity. In an ordination charge now before me—The preacher in addressing his son, observes—"That the "weight of his undertaking has not its parallel in *any of the* "*departments of human society,*" and informs him that, "ministers who possess the pastoral office *themselves*, can com- "municate it, AND NONE OTHERS:" and that "this has "been the opinion of the church of God from the beginning, "although a few *levelling sectaries* have thought otherwise: ——That "MINISTERIAL DECISIONS, regulated by the "scriptures, will be followed with rewards and punishments "of inconceivable worth, or unutterable terror; and those "eternal in their duration:—that the souls of his [the young "gentleman's] hearers, are deposited in *his* hands, a more "valuable deposit than those great interests which are com- "mited to ministers of state, to admirals, to generals, to "lawyers, or to physicians."—He exhorts him to "preserve "the dignity, and to be *tenacious* of the *authority* of his of- "fice;" and "*not to suffer* parents to alienate their children "from *him* by a bad education, &c." When the preacher terms all those who deem it their duty to oppose the claims of an arrogant priesthood, and more especially of an arrogant *dissenting* priesthood, "levelling sectaries," who oppose "the practice of the church of God from the beginning," he excites compassion for his ignorance of the new Testament, and ecclesiastical history: but when he proceeds to represent such persons, who dare not make a *trade* of religion; who preach the gospel as our Saviour and his Apostles preached it, to the poor, without any temporal emolument,—when

the cassock, the cloak, and the band, all of which distinctions he thought tended to confirm the erro-

he represents them as " licentious usurpers, who hate a dis- " tinct order of men, whose duty it is to reprove *their flagiti-* " *ous conduct ;*" he must bear to be told the awful truth, that there are few persons, who have displayed more arrogance, more malignity, more attachment to the pleasures and the luxuries of life, whose conduct has been more "*flagi-* " *tious,*" or who have afforded greater triumph to infidelity, than those priests who have all their lives had the highest ideas of their *own sanctity of character and office !* Thus it was in the Jewish church in our Saviour's time; and thus it has been in a greater or less degree in the christian church " from " the beginning" down to the present day. Well might the preacher add—" that there is much less danger in placing " *an ignorant rustic in an apothecary's shop*, than in sanction- " ing the entrance of a person into the ministry without " knowledge, faithfulness, and prudence." See—*A charge delivered at the ordination of the Rev. George Clayton, at Walworth, by the Rev. John Clayton, sen. June* 7, 1804. Printed for Williams, & Co.

In another *charge* the preacher (a Mr. Cockin) sets out by informing the person ordained—" That he addresses him with " all the authority of a minister !" The nature of the ministerial office, as described by this *Reverend* gentleman, is curious: the following extract will doubtless amuse the reader.

" The Hebrew word translated *preacher* signifies a *Collector*, " or one that gathers together.———Seize all you can find " in the writings of the ancients or the improvements of the " moderns: gather ideas from travellers, historians, philoso- " phers, and divines:—the whole is *lawful game!*———In " the new Testament the word used for a *preacher* seems to be " taken from the business of a *public crier*, or one whose busi- " ness it is to commend the different articles he has to shew. " No idea could be more analogous to the nature of this sa- " cred work.—We are *ambassadors* for Christ.—The pulpit is

neous opinions which people in general have of the nature of the ministerial office. He had no objec-

" a minister's *throne*, on which he appears with *heavenly ma-*
" *jesty*—to this *sacred* spot he ascends with trembling steps.
" ——He is an *ecclesiastical officer*; a *steward of the mysteries*
" *of God*, who *partakes of the honour of his Lord !*—As an ec-
" clesiastical officer, we distinguish the christian preacher from
" all other officers whatever. The *authority of his instalment*,
" the nature of the work, and the eminence of his station, are
" all of a peculiar kind.—This is the most sacred and honour-
" able office any man can hold: it elevates to a character su-
" perior to any that angels ever bore! We have the distin-
" guished honour *of bringing messages from heaven* to our fel-
" low men.—Well might the Apostle magnify *such* an office.
" ——You have the honour Sir, " [addressing the young gen-
tleman just come from an academy]" of being appointed *keeper*
" *of the archives*, the *sacred records of the state:* you are be-
" come *master of the rolls*, you are *warden of the tower*, in
" which is deposited the king's armoury, and all the precious
" things of inestimable value," [the preacher, who, it is evi-
dent had visited the Tower of London, forgot to add, master
of the *mint*, and keeper of the *wild beasts*,] " the *crown*, and
" the *sceptre*, the *sword of state*, and whatever belongs to the
" honour of the king of saints. Be ready to *shew these*, [walk
in gentlemen, &c.] on all proper occasions to his majesty's
" loyal subjects.——As a preacher, you are the *Speaker* of
" the assembly. You have been chosen to this office in a
" way the most flattering to the feelings of man, by the *una-*
" *nimous vote of the whole house:* we are come here to intro-
" duce you into the *chair;* you are the representative of the
" king; nothing can be done till you are there, and therefore
" always be in your place at the time: maintain the order of
" the house, &c. &c." The preacher gives a variety of direc-
tions respecting the *style* of a discourse, recommending the
" graces of speech," remarking however, " that style is not
" the primary object, as it is the cloth that warms, and not

tion to an academic appearing in the habit to which his degree entitled him; but a dissenting

" the *elegancy* with which it is *mounted!*"—But I have already quoted too much from such a discourse!

If any thing can add to the disgust of the reader, it must be the intolerable self-conceit with which the preacher represents himself as a man of singular talents and learning, and which is further exemplified in his recommendation, " that no one " should be allowed to exercise in the public offices of reli- " gion, but such as had received proper testimonials from " competent judges of their abilities to edify the church of " God." Had however, this custom prevailed, the preacher himself, judging from this discourse, would never have been suffered to enter the pulpit.—See—*A Charge delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Charles Dewhirst, at Bury, May* 28, 1801. *By Joseph Cockin.* Printed for Conder, &c."

Some apology is due to the reader for swelling this note with so much bombastic nonsense as I have quoted. Had it proceeded from some obscure methodist village preachers, I should not have noticed it; but Mr. Cockin is pastor of a large congregation in a populous town in the North; and Mr. Clayton of a large and opulent congregation in the Metropolis, whose immediate predecessors were eminently distinguished for their talents, learning, piety, and candour! That such opinions should be endured by protestant dissenting congregations, affords melancholy evidence, how little they understand their own principles, and the danger they are in of becoming equally priest-ridden with the members of the church of England, and the church of Rome.

Such opinions, however, of the dignity of the dissenting priesthood, are so contrary both to Scripture and to common sense, as to be reprobated, even by some of the ministers who assisted in the ordinations alluded to: and this accounts for the confused and contradictory sentiments which are not unfrequently apparent in services of this kind. In the introductory discourse delivered at the ordination of the *Rev. George*

minister, who aped the dress of the established clergy, was always the subject of his ridicule.

Clayton, Mr. *Kingsbury*, represents the service of the day "as "a public *attestation* to, and *confirmation* of a mutual choice "between minister and people;"—and adds—"he dare not as- "sert that the rite of laying on of hands is essential to ordina- "tion."—If so, the pastor must have been *previously ordained* by the people, who afterwards invite others before whom they "publicly *declare*, and solemnly *ratify* the *contract*." The *Rev. John Clayton, sen.* is, however, positive (and I confess I partly agree with him) that "if presbyters," (himself and his reverend brethren) do not possess the SOLE RIGHT of communicating the pastoral office, such an ordination as that in which he was engaging, and "all similar ordi- "nations, *are to be condemned as solemn impertinencies!*" It is likewise well known, that at the ordination of the *Rev. John Clayton, jun.* the discordance of opinion, on this subject, as expressed by Mr. *Humphries*, who delivered the introductory discourse, and by the father of the young gentleman ordained, who gave the charge, was so great, that it was with difficulty they were persuaded to join in the publication of the service. At Mr. *Dewhirst's* ordination, after the high church claims advanced on the part of the dissenting priesthood, by the *Rev. Joseph Cockin;* Mr. *John Mead Ray*, in his discourse addressed to the people, cautioned them against "calling any man "master upon earth, or bowing to any *authority* but that of "their master in heaven." He adds—"I am sensible these "are not the times in which any person will be *likely to succeed* "in claiming superstitious or extravagant respect for the pas- "tors of the christian church, *nor am I disposed to advance* "*claims of this nature*, as the evidence of your love to them." What a satire was such language on the preceding charge! This confusion of opinions may with great good humour, be buried, during the festivities which, so contrary to the universal practice recorded in the new Testament, always accompany a modern ordination; but the parties should be

Although he so far accommodated himself to the prejudices of christians, as commonly to appear in

careful of afterwards exposing this confusion to the world; more especially as it tends to confirm many in the opinion, not only—that such ordination is totally unnecessary to the scriptural exercise of the pastoral office,—but that some of the ministers who are engaged in the service are of the same opinion, and that they can only justify their conduct on the plea of *expediency*.

Whilst writing this note I am happy to find similar sentiments to those I have expressed, in the writings of that respectable minister of the Baptist denomination—the late Mr. ABRAHAM BOOTH, who amongst a variety of excellent observations on the pride, &c. of ecclesiastics, remarks as follows. "I will add, whatever kind of succession to the "apostles may be claimed by diocesan bishops, yet let not "protestant dissenting ministers arrogate an apostolic mis- "sion, powers and authority by calling themselves AMBAS- "SADORS OF CHRIST: for that character seems to have "been peculiar to the first-rate messengers of our divine "Sovereign: or, if any of those who publish the gospel of "peace consider a title of that high importance, as quite "suitable to the dignity of their station, they might with "propriety be requested to shew their credentials." After expressing his dislike of titles "devised by ecclesiastics to "render themselves respectable," he subjoins the following anecdote from the pen of the learned Dr. JOHN OWEN respecting himself. "For the title of *Reverend*, I do give [Mr. "Cawdrey] notice that I very little value it ever since I have "considered the saying of LUTHER: *Nunquam periclitatur* "*religio nisi inter* REVERENDISSIMOS; so that he may, as "to me, forbear it for the future, and call me as the qua- "kers do, and it shall suffice."—See—*Mr. Booth's Essay on the kingdom of Christ. 2d. edition, price* 1*s.* 6*d.* After reading this tract it need not excite surprise that one of Mr. Booth's friends, and brethren in the ministry, the late Mr.

black or grey, he occasionally wore different coloured clothes; and the teacher was equally welcome to his pulpit, whether habited in a coat of black, blue, drab, or any other colour, with buttons covered or metal.*

Rance, should in his dying hours when mentioning to his friends the inscription of his name to be put on his tomb-stone, add " with a peculiar emphasis,—Don't call me *Reverend!*" See *Evangel. Mag. for July* 1807.

* If the *dress* of ministers were generally considered as a matter of indifference I should not have thought the subject worthy of notice. It is however, but too evident that the christian church, in general, is still in such a state of non-age, as to attach the idea of holiness to *garments* and to *colours*. This connection has sometimes had an unhappy effect where one might have least expected. I knew an instance in which a dissenting minister, justly respected for his talents and virtues, on being presented by the female part of his audience with a gown and cassock, deemed the matter of such importance, that he, before a numerous congregation, expressed his gratitude to the ladies for having " clothed him in the " robes of the sanctuary!" This attachment to " weak and " beggarly elements," is, I hope, on the decline, especially in the country; that remnant of the rags of popish finery, a *band*, is now chiefly to be seen dangling under the chins of the ministers of the metropolis.—Whilst I do not presume to blame any person for so far indulging the fancies of our " *children of larger growth*," as to confine himself to wear a mourning habit, nor should I in certain cases be inclined to censure him, were he to submit to be covered with a flounced surplice, and to be adorned with a crucifix, yet I cannot but deem it the duty of every man of sense to endeavour to lead the people to reflect on the folly of all such distinctions in the christian church: though alas! it sometimes happens not only in this but in far more important matters, that a minis-

In 1775, Mr. Robinson published *A—Discussion of the question—Is it lawful and right for a man to marry the sister of his deceased wife?* which was subjoined to—*The legal degrees of Marriage stated and considered, by John Alleyne, Barrister at Law.* This tract was written at the

ter instead of endeavouring to remove, is endeavouring to confirm popular prejudices.

I have on this subject been particularly struck, when visiting some of the Roman catholic churches in the Netherlands, which previous to their conquest by France were adorned with the *chef d'œuvres* of the great masters of the Flemish school. A catholic painter, when using his pencil, is careful to attend to historic truth; his pictures are therefore, standing protests against the practice of his church. Whilst viewing the variety of splendid garments which adorn her priests, we behold a representation of *Jesus Christ* and his apostles, preaching to the people in habits no ways distinguished from those of their auditors.

When will the clerical profession take a hint on this subject from the medical? A modern writer informs us—"Some of the faculty having taken offence on observing that "Dr. Somerville frequently appeared in public without his "sword, and in *coloured clothes*, and being on that account "one day openly insulted by his indignant brethren, he came "the next day to the coffee house, having on the *jehu* of his "coachman, who on the contrary, had on the doctor's tye. "*Here, gentlemen*, he said, is an *argument to the purpose*, "*that knowledge does not consist in exteriors. There are none* "*of you who would trust me to drive you, and the world shall* "*soon see, also, as I pass through the streets of London, that* "*the wig does not constitute the physician.* Having made for "several days this exhibition, the tye-wig was quckly con-"verted into a subject of ridicule, and Dr. Somerville gained "the day."—*Thornton's Philosophy of medicine*, vol. II. p. 43.

request of the late Dr. Stennett, and Mr. Josiah Thompson, baptist ministers, well known in the religious world. Our author argued the affirmative side of the question: the editor of the *Legal Degrees* had a high opinion of the merit of the performance, as appears by a handsome letter sent to the author, of which the following is an extract.

"REVEREND SIR, *Watford, Aug.* 18, 1775.

"Impressed with gratitude for the very great "favor you have done me at the request of the "Reverend Dr. Stennett and Mr. Thompson, I "cannot but, in the first instance, return you my "thanks for your Strictures on Affinite Marriages, "which (though I abhor flattery, yet) I must say, "are exceedingly sensible and conclusive in fa-"vor of such alliances."

In the year 1775, Mr. Robinson published the first volume of a translation from the French of the sermons of *Mr. Saurin*, pastor of the French protestant church at the Hague, which was followed at intervals by three more volumes, the last of which appeared in 1782. Two years afterwards was published a second edition, together with an additional volume, to which was added a translation of *An Essay onthe conduct of David at the court of Achish, King of Gath. By Mr. Dumont, pastor of the French church at Rotterdam.* In an advertisement to the latter, the translator gives a very high character of a volume of posthumous sermons of the author, pronouncing them "the most plain

" artless and edifying he ever had the happiness of " reading . . . placid, ingenious, gentle, natural, " and full of evidence and pathos." The sermons of *Dumont*, are not, however, to be placed in the highest class; although they are far superior to the generality of sermons usually termed evangelical and experimental, and are not undeserving of an english translation. A third and a large impression of Saurin's Sermons, together with a sixth volume, translated by that eminent preacher and writer, the late *Dr. Henry Hunter*, have since been published, and which has been followed by a *seventh* volume, translated by *Mr. Joseph Sutcliffe, of Halifax*.

To the volumes translated by our author are prefixed prefaces replete with instruction and entertainment, and which may safely be placed amongst the most valuable of his works. The preface to the first volume displays the abilities of the author in historical composition, and that to the third, his piety and candour on that most interesting subject, freedom of thought in matters of religion; but the latter laid the foundation of a controversy, more particularly with those who arrogate to themselves the term *orthodox*. Respecting this controversy I shall hazard a few remarks when considering another of Mr. Robinson's publications, in which the subject is farther discussed, and applied to a most important practical purpose.

Although I have had the pleasure of reading the twelve volumes of Saurin in the original,

I should by no means deem myself properly qualified to criticise the translation, had I not found my opinion confirmed by much better judges: but during a frequent perusal it struck me the work was differently performed, some parts appear to be both faithful and spirited, in others there are evident marks of haste and carelessness. I have heard that several of the discourses were translated by some of Mr. Robinson's family, subject to his correction, which may account for the difference: it is however surprising that in some instances, he should have mistaken the import of even the plainest words, one of which occurs in the title to a sermon on the divine attributes—"*Le grandeur de* "*Dieu*," which is unhappily translated and runs through the sermon, the *grandeur*, instead of the *greatness* of God. Considering however the author's numerous avocations, and constant labours, it may perhaps rather excite surprise that he succeeded so well: his labours proved most acceptable to the religious world: many of the sermons of Saurin rank in the highest class, and possess the singular advantage of combining the excellencies of both the English and French preachers; the reasoning of the former and the eloquence of the latter. Dr. Doddridge was of opinion that in them were united the beauties of Cicero and Demosthenes.

Admirable, however, as these discourses in general are, they are not free from defects. The principal of these are pointed out by Mr. Robinson in the preface to the 5th. volume. Pulpit fash-

ions, it may be remarked, by way of apology for Saurin, are followed equally with others. Too high ideas of the ministerial office, have proved the bane of almost every sect of christians ever since christianity was first *established*, or, more correctly speaking, *corrupted* by Constantine; and notwithstanding the reformation from popery, and the gradual advancement of light and knowledge, our protestant churches have much to learn from those of the primitive christians. Long and laboured explanations of scripture are still common in the introduction of a dutch sermon. Saurin, a minister of the presbyterian church of Holland, was surrounded by consistories and synods whose business it was to watch over the orthodoxy, rather than the morality of their ministers: he was a man who thought for himself, ventured out of the beaten track, and whose sermons diligently attended to, must have taught others to follow his example; but the preacher appeared sensible of the delicacy of his situation, and in some of his best sermons felt himself compelled to labour to prove that what he had said was not inconsistent with the established creed and catechism: he was indeed persecuted for his opinions, not only in the catholic church of France, but in the presbyterian church of Holland; but although banished from his country by the former, he proved victorious in the latter.*

* When I was at Rotterdam a few years since, I observed a curious instance of that bigotted attachment to formularies

May I here be permitted to make a general remark for the benefit of the younger part of my readers. It is whilst perusing our best writers, that we ought more particularly to examine and to judge for ourselves: we are scarcely in danger of being led aside by common place authors, in whose writings we find nothing to object to, and nothing to interest. It is when attending to our *Saurins*, our *Robinsons*, or to allude to those of a different description, our *Shakespears*, our *Miltons*, men who work themselves into our very souls, that we ought to be on our guard to distinguish between truth and error, virtue and vice, beauty and deformity. It is perhaps to force upon us the im-

in the members of the national church of Holland. Looking over a Dutch translation of the discourses of Mr. Newton, Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, London, entitled *Messiah*, I came to the part in which the author makes some just remarks on the nature of the differences amongst christians in their explanations of scripture doctrines, and exhorts them to candour and forbearance. To these remarks the translator has added a note expressive of his approbation of the sentiments of the author, so far as they applied to those *lesser points* on which christians might safely differ; but *that uniformity was absolutely necessary in those important points which the* SYNOD OF DORT *had determined!* What a pity, I could not help remarking to a friend, when reading this passage, that the staunch disciples of that venerable synod (venerable they truly were as individuals, although they might have been better employed than in multiplying human creeds for themselves and posterity) could not preserve the house in which they drew up their grave ecclesiastical decisions, from being perverted to a very different purpose. When I resided in Holland, it was a house of *ill fame!*

portant lessons that we are to *call no man master upon earth*, and that we are hereafter to be personally responsible for the exercise of those powers and faculties with which the Almighty has endowed us, that we so frequently find the greatest excellencies united with the greatest defects. Saurin's sermons are adapted for closet rather than for family reading: they are, however, well deserving the serious and repeated perusal of private christians in general, and of christian ministers in particular; and were those teachers in the church who profess to be of Saurin's doctrinal sentiments, intimately acquainted with his discourses, hearers perhaps, would not so frequently complain of poverty of ideas and language in the pulpit, and preachers would less frequently complain of inattention and yawning in the congregation.

There are some circumstances attending Mr. Robinson's translation of Saurin's sermons, mentioned by Mr. Dyer, too curious to be omitted on this occasion. The biographer informs us that the clergy of the established church paid him "many compliments for his elegant and useful "translation, and made him liberal proposals for "original compositions, or for translations of "Saurin not yet presented to the public; and that "five guineas a sermon were offered him by an "Irish dignitary, and other proposals submitted "to his consideration by an English prebendary." Instances are alluded to of "a modern right re-"verend person, strongly soliciting the favour of

" a sermon, and of a very orthodox divine fore-
" stalling a part of Saurin's translation, confiden-
" tially entrusted to him, which he inserted in a
" publication of his own." Dr. Beadon, bishop of Glocester, is mentioned as the person who so strongly solicited the favour, but whether the solicitation was complied with we are not informed. It is, however, added, that although Mr. Robinson uniformly refused the request of " many a
" younker," as he expressed himself, in the university, " the courtly address, and the elegant
" solicitation of a dignitary he could not so easily
" resist; but though poor he was scrupulous, and
" made few compliances of this kind:" he does not appear to have been quite satisfied as to his conduct in these instances: he therefore consulted amongst others, his friend the late excellent Dr. Evans of Bristol, who answered him, very properly, as follows:—" Seriously, I see no harm
" in the world in your making consecration ser-
" mons if you can get any one to preach them:
" if our parsons here would but preach what I
" could compose for them, I would work night
" and day, but I would serve them with better
" husks than they feed their flocks with now....
" If you trim, and turn high-churchman, you will
" be criminal indeed....As I think none of us
" should scruple to preach a visitation or conse-
" cration sermon, would the bishops permit us,
" I see no reason why we should scruple to make

" one to be preached."* Such was the high opinion entertained even by the dignitaries of the establishment of Mr. Robinson's abilities as a translator and a preacher.

During the time Mr. Robinson was employed in his translation of Saurin, he bestowed much attention to the history of the nonconformist ministers who were ejected from their livings, or silenced by that scandal to our statute books, and to the church of England, the *Act of Uniformity.* The history of his own church and congregation he detailed in his church book, and which Mr. Dyer observes " would, if published make an " entertaining little performance," but a sight of it I have not been able to procure. His labours were of considerable service to his friend Mr. Palmer, the venerable pastor of the independent church at Hackney, in preparing a new edition of *The Nonconformist's Memorial:*—a work, which as it affords the most striking practical illustration of the worth and excellence of the principles of genuine nonconformity, ought to have a place in the library of every dissenting family, and which it is the incumbent duty of every dissenting parent to read to, and recommend to the serious attention of his children.

In 1776, Mr. Robinson published—*A Lecture on a becoming behaviour in religious assemblies,* preached three years before, but never

* Dyer's Memoirs. p. 87—91.

intended for publication: a very incorrect copy by some means was circulated; the preacher was therefore compelled to publish in his own defence. The discourse, ingenious and excellent, was occasioned by the interruptions given to public worship, owing to the rude behaviour of some of the undergraduates of the university. Mr. Robinson found himself at length compelled, not only to preach against, but to seek legal redress for such outrages on the religious rights of Protestant Dissenters. Complaints were made to the proper persons: after some delay, it was agreed, that two young men who had been notoriously guilty should pay a fine of fifty pounds as settled by law, or ask pardon in the public prints: the latter course was preferred; but one of the young men on account of his general character was excused. The trustees of the meeting sent a letter of thanks to Dr. Farmer, tutor of Emanuel college for his conduct in the business; in which they at the same time justified themselves for the steps they had taken: the following is an extract.

"In a profligate seaport-town our dissenting "brethren meet without interruption; and gen- "tlemen of both army and navy, occasionally at "our Cambridge meeting, have blushed at the "difference. In the most dissolute parts of Lon- "don, disturbances are unknown in meeting- "houses: how mortifying the reflection! that ci- "vility, the offspring of good sense, is met with

" in sinks of ignorance, which is not to be ob-
" tained at a seat of literature!

" A gentleman of your delicacy and piety will
" find it difficult to believe half what we could tell
" you on this head. Would you imagine, Sir, that
" we scarcely ever meet without interruptions from
" the under-graduates; that every agreeable fe-
" male in the society is exposed to the same in-
" sults as in a bawdy-house; no pew privileged
" from a bold intrusion; no family, however con-
" siderable in fortune or credit, from insolent af-
" fronts? Is it credible, that prostitutes should
" parade our ailes in academic habits? An unfore-
" seen accident discovered the sex of such a one
" but a fortnight ago. Is it sufferable, that on re-
" proving these disorders our lives should be
" threatened? Let a veil for ever cover these
" enormities. Nothing induces us to mention them
" now but the desire of convincing you, Sir, that
" our lenity has been infamously abused, and,
" consequently, that it is a duty we owe to the so-
" ciety under our management, vigorously to
" support prosecution.

" To say nothing of our own minister, (a grow-
" ing love to him, perhaps, makes us partial in
" his favour); how can we bear to see graduates
" of our own universities, when they occasion-
" ally preach to us, men of learning and piety,
" put to the blush, not more confounded at the
" iniquity, than surprised at the novelty of such
" behaviour? Our American brethren were not

" at all conciliated to English episcopacy, but " on the contrary highly disgusted with it, by the " behaviour of the gown at our meeting: one of " them protesting,—I have preached in England, " Scotland, Ireland, in various parts of America, " to congregations of all denominations, to polite " citizens, and to naked Indians; but never did I " see such heathenish impiety during divine ser- " vice as in the Cambridge under-graduates. In " vain we tell them of the learning of some of the " members of this university: in vain we proclaim " the piety of others: in vain we assure them of " the candour of all the graduates: disturbances " in devotion strike serious minds too deeply to " be easily forgotten.

" After all—Who does all this? A set of lads " just come from school, who by the vigilance of " the masters might be kept if not obedient to " them, at least at a distance from us. To the " honour of the university be it spoken, we never " received an insult from a graduate. We are too " well acquainted, sir, with your deserved cha- " racter, to imagine any apology needful for this " information. Receive it, sir, as an apology for " our exposing one of your pupils. We are sor- " ry it happened so, but the present circumstances " require it.

" Allow us, good sir, to assure you, that we " shall ever retain the liveliest gratitude for your " extreme civility, and with profound respect are

" Your obliged Servants."

The methods pursued, together with Mr. Robinson's sermon, appear to have produced the desired effect. Although the attendance of the members of the university, at the baptist meeting-house, has been frequent, no similar complaints have been made from that period to the present.

About this time (1776) the controversy respecting the Divinity of Christ which had been carried on principally by members of the church of England, some of whom had from the most conscientious motives resigned their preferments, much engaged the public attention. Mr. Robinson appeared on the popular side of the question, and published *A Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ in a pastoral letter, addressed to a congregation of protestant dissenters at Cambridge.* This piece, is written in a style of ease and elegance, and is distinguished by a novelty of manner, in which criticism is blended with entertainment, and for that truly candid and christian spirit, which alas! so seldom characterises religious controversy: it was highly panegyrised by several dignitaries, and other learned members of the church of England, as well as by the most eminent divines amongst the dissenters; a fourth edition was published in 1780. A reply was written, but not till five years afterwards, by a man whose friendship I deem a distinguished honour of my life, the truly venerable and excellent *Theophilus Lindsey*, who had given the best proof of the sincerity of his professions, by the sacrifices he had

made, forsaking all present preferment, and superior preferment in prospect, for what he deemed the cause of truth, disdaining those pitiful falsehoods, equivocations and subterfuges which, in the affair of subscription, disgrace the body of the clergy. Mr. Lindsey's tract was first printed anonymously, but in 1789, a second edition was presented to the public with the author's name. The letters which passed between Mr. Robinson, Mr. Lindsey, and Dr. Jebb, on the former presenting his "Plea" to the two latter, are, for the christian liberality which characterizes them, an honour to the different parties.*

An additional testimony to the merit of this work has recently appeared in the memoirs of a great man, the late *Archdeacon Blackburne*, and which it would be injustice not to present to the reader. "About five years ago I know not what chance "threw in my way a pamphlet entitled *A Plea* "*for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* "I perused this pamphlet with care and atten- "tion, and was both surprised and concerned to "find so many of my friend Lindsey's arguments "and positions [in his APOLOGY] so totally sub- "verted *a fundamentis*, provided the pleader's "reasonings and authorities were well grounded. "To prove this to myself I consulted a number "of the texts he had cited, and found his super- "structure bottomed upon a rock....Indeed so

* Vol. IV. p. 219—222.

"far as concerns the Socinians, I think it unan-
"swerable: and though I do not agree with him
"in every thing, yet I freely own his arguments
"and authorities have made a considerable al-
"teration in my sentiments, and taken away every
"shadow of a scruple with respect to conformity
"to the church of England, so far as the divini-
"ty of Christ is acknowledged, exclusive of the
"jargon of Athanasius. If this creed had never
"appeared I verily think the Divinity of Christ
"would never have been controverted." To this account is added by the editor, my respected friend, the Rev. Francis Blackburne, son of the Archdeacon,—"This short tract [of the
"Archdeacon's] was written in 1782. It appears
"that in 1785, an *Examination* of Mr. Ro-
"binson's *Plea* was published by the Rev. T.
"Lindsey, and presented to Mr. Blackburne: we
"have not, however, been able to discover, that
"the Archdeacon's sentiments of Mr. Robinson's
"work underwent any change, as he recommended
"the serious perusal of it to some young clergy-
"men a very few weeks before his death."*

Excellent as is this tract, it gave offence to the rigid Trinitarians, those, who to use Mr. Robinson's language "inhabit the torid zone," for no other reason than that the author instead of pronouncing sentence of eternal damnation on all those who did not believe the doctrine he had de-

* Blackburne's Works, 7 vols. 8vo. Vol. I. p. cxxxv. vi.

fended, expressed his hope of their salvation. Would to God that some of these censorious bigots exhibited in their own temper, life and conversation, such evidences of genuine christian piety as some of the men with whom they will hold no fellowship on earth, and whom they exclude from heaven: but the conduct of Athanasian Trinitarians it must be acknowledged, is in this respect consistent; it is the natural result of their reading in the public offices of devotion, a creed to *all* and *every part* of which they have in the most solemn manner given their *unfeigned assent and consent:* but what appears somewhat extraordinary is, that those wide extremes, *bigotry* and *scepticism*, should have united in attacking Mr. Robinson in the most valuable part of his character, his integrity; for most certain it is, that the unwarrantable and injudicious remarks of Mr. Dyer when criticising this performance, have given a colour to the injurious reports in circulation of Mr. Robinson's not sincerely believing the doctrine he was defending! The only evidence however which Mr. Dyer has brought forward to support this charge, is, that which as a friend, and biographer entrusted with confidential papers, he ought to have concealed, but which after all the assertions and insinuations made use of, do not bear on the merits of the question. We are informed as a proof of Mr. Robinson's embarrassed state of mind, and that "his aim in writing was rather to display his "agility than to secure a triumph," that "amongst

" his papers is the second edition of the letter to " Dr. Hallifax written by Mr. Blackhall, previous " to Mr. Robinson's publication;—that this pam- " phlet contains marginal notes in Mr. Robinson's " hand writing which afford numerous and indis- " putable testimonies to the wavering state of the " author's mind."* If, however, Mr. Dyer had no other testimonies to produce from these *private marginal notes*, than those he has selected, I may very safely assert, that Mr. Robinson might firmly believe in the Divinity of Christ as illustrated in the *Plea*, and yet have his doubts how far all the texts brought by another supporter of this doctrine, and who explained it differently, might be suitable for the purpose; yea, I will go farther, and declare (and for the truth of my opinion I appeal to every thinking man) that a book of controversy was scarcely ever written, in which those who might in the main, be of the opinion of the writer, approved of *all* his reasonings. That Mr. Robinson was perfectly sincere in the belief of what he published is plain from the work itself; his language in many parts is not only firm but serious and solemn. It ought not to be lost sight of, that the author at the time of writing did not profess himself a Trinitarian in the popular sense of the word, and particularly objected to the whole of the creed of Athanasius. Had Mr. Robinson been swayed by the contemptible motive ascribed to

* Dyer's Memoirs. p. 110—114.

him of endeavouring to gain applause at the expence of sincerity, he might have had various opportunities of gaining additional applause. When the *Plea* was in the meridian of its popularity, I, who was at that time somewhat nearer the established faith in certain doctrinal points than at present, solicited the author to write a piece on a similar plan, respecting the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit. His reply was at once expressive of the sincerity of his opinions, and the purity of his motives:—"How can a man "write upon a subject the truth of which he him-"self has considerable doubts?"

The following year our author published—*The History and the Mystery of Good Friday*, a small pamphlet that has run through numerous large editions, and in which the evil, and the foolery of church holidays is with equal humour, learning and argument, unanswerably demonstrated. Displeasing as were the plain truths abounding in this tract to many of the clergy, some of them could not help expressing their admiration. The pamphlet together with the preface to the third volume of Saurin's sermons, occasioned some remarks written by Dr. Tucker, Dean of Glocester, entitled *Queries relating to religious liberty, and church establishments, submitted to the candour of Robert Robinson, the learned and ingenious translator of Saurin's Sermons.* To these queries, which were never published, was returned a private answer.

In 1778, Mr. Robinson published *A Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity for the instruction of Catechumens.* As this little work ranks amongst the most popular of the writings of our author, and has been much misrepresented, it may not be unacceptable to the reader to have some account of its origin and progress.

At the annual meeting of the *Baptist Eastern Association* held at Hemel Hempstead, May 14, 15, 1776, Mr. Robinson was chosen Moderator, and was desired to draw up the circular letter. On the second day he informed the assembly—"That from accurate accounts collected by the "Rev. Josiah Thompson, of London, and transmitted to him it appeared, that there were 1243 "congregations of protestant dissenters in England and Wales, of the presbyterian, independent, and baptist denomination; 444 of which "were baptist:—That on the whole, the baptist "cause was visibly increasing, although the cause "of nonconformity in general was supposed to "be declining." Mr. Robinson further stated,—"That he feared the cause declined for want of "being understood; and that while we were zealous in maintaining the doctrines and the morality of the gospel, we should also take pains to "inculcate the grounds, and sreaons of our dissent from the established hierarchy: he therefore requested leave to lay before the assembly "the general outlines of a plan for the better informing of our people, especially our young

" people, of the nature and importance of this " subject." On which it was unanimously re- " solved that the Moderator propose his plan. Mr. R. then proposed " to make a general divi- " sion of each of our congregations into three " parts :—the first is the church, and they are sup- " posed to understand the matter, or at least to " have free access to the pastor for information. " The second, of children, to be catechised in " the first principles of religion; and the third, of " catechumens to consist of young persons, and " particularly of those who desired admission to " church fellowship; that to these the pastor " should, for the space of about two hours, in one " evening in a fortnight. during the winter half " year, give a lecture on the subject of noncon- " formity, in the manner of Mr. Palmer's cate- " chism; one lecture on the history, and another " on the principles of the nonconformists, in some " such manner as the professors in an university " give lectures to their pupils. He expatiated on " the advantages of this plan, and wished some " one of the ministers would draw up an analysis " of a course of such lectures for the use of the as- " sociated churches, on all which he begged the " advice of this Assembly." After fully discussing the above plan, it was resolved,—" That the plan " is eligible and may be useful; and that the mo- " derator (Mr. Robinson) is desired to draw up

" such an analysis and lay it before the associa-
" tion next year."

The circular letter* consisting of remarks on the nature and importance of religious principle, and excellent practical exhortations, was then read and the business concluded.

The plan recommended by Mr. Robinson of dividing dissenting congregations into different classes for the purpose of religious instruction, appears to be somewhat similar to that successfully pursued by Dr. Priestley at Birmingham, and at Hackney.† Were such a plan more generally adopted by dissenting ministers, it would be far superior to that which chiefly consists in attending to one class only, and in teaching the *Assembly's Catechism*, which, however it may serve for its neat, concise definitions of the doctrines of high Calvinism, is by no means suited to the capacities of youth; and is commonly learned without interest, if not with disgust, and soon forgotten. Instruction adapted to different ages and capacities, might be productive of the happiest effects; in improving the minds, settling the principles, and preserving the morals of our dissenting youth, who too frequently when they arrive at years of maturity, and are no longer under the

* Vol. IV. p. 192.

† See—Memoirs of Dr. Priestley, P. 98, 119, 123, 124. Likewise the Doctor's sermon on acceptance of the pastoral office at Hackney, in the preface to which is a detailed account of his system of catechising.

eye of their superiors, relinquish at once the principles of nonconformity, and the practice of piety.

Although it does not appear that Mr. Robinson's "Plan of Lectures," was produced at the next association, it was printed early in the year 1778: but as it was designed "merely for the use of a "few associated churches, it was not then pub-"lished." The association which met at Harlow in June, read, approved, and recommended it to their sister churches. This recommendation was mentioned by Mr. Burke some years afterwards in the house of commons, in a debate on the Test Act. That corrupt, narrow-minded, bigotted, inflammatory, but eloquent statesman and pensioner, whose writings on the subject of the French revolution, have done inconceivable mischief, took this opportunity of misrepresenting the "Plan", calumniating the author, and also of reviling the whole body of dissenters, on account of the approbation of a small association of baptist ministers, which he ignorantly and pompously termed the *Harlow Synod.* His attacks were with great justice and spirit repelled by that uniform and warm friend to unbounded religious toleration, CHARLES JAMES FOX. In the house of lords the work was respectfully mentioned, by one of the best and most honest statesmen of the day, the late Marquis of Lansdowne. The book became much admired, and much abused. Four editions were called for in rapid succession. Dr. Sturges, prebendary of Winchester, &c. made some

animadversions on it in letters addressed to the Lord Bishop of London, but in which he rather confirmed than refuted Mr. Robinson's positions. Whilst he was lavish in his panegyrics on church officers, he acknowledged the necessity of a reformation in the church. The grand points, religious liberty, the unchristian nature of civil establishments of religion, were most prudently left untouched. Dr. Edmund Keene, bishop of Ely, in a charge to the clergy of his diocese, made some strictures on the "Plan," but at the same time respectfully mentioned the author's writings in general, and spoke in such handsome terms of the serious manner in which the dissenting ministers performed their devotions, while he reproved the careless manner of those of the established church, that Mr. Curtis, the dissenting minister at Linton, who went to the visitation dinner, thanked the bishop for the compliments paid the dissenters; on which the bishop drank his health, and Mr. Curtis gave the bishop's in return. Several of the clergy, together with a swarm of ignoramuses slandered our author in sermons and pamphlets, all of which, by him unnoticed, were hurried down the stream of oblivion. Justice however demands the acknowledgement, that there were serious, well disposed persons, who thought some of the assertions of the author unguarded, and the language too strong. Amongst this number may I venture to include myself. Conversing with him on the subject, I stated some passages which I

thought objectionable. After explaining those passages, he in his impressive manner, taking me by the hand, thus addressed me :—" Friend Flow-" er, I give you full credit for the purity of your " motives; but you are a young man; when you " are as well acquainted with ecclesiastical history " and ecclesiastics as I am, you will think I have " been merciful." I need scarcely inform the reader, that the prediction of our author proved to be not very wide of the truth.

To the fifth edition of this work, the author prefixed a preface written in his happiest style, in which he, to the impartial and candid, satisfactorily explains those passages which had been liable to misrepresentation. In this preface the natural advantages, and constitutional privileges of a Briton are delineated with equal truth and beauty. The editors of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* had they read this edition, would scarcely have dared to expose themselves by the remark—" The plan of lectures on the principles of non-" conformity, is a piece of the most *unjust and* " *illiberal abuse* that we have ever seen, and " would have disgraced the most high-flying pu-" ritan of the last century;"* although such a remark is only one instance amongst many of the strong prejudice, gross partiality, and arrogant criticism that blemish that otherwise respectable work; the authors of which whilst misrepresent-

* Vol. I. Article Robinson.

ing the writers of other countries, are in the most fulsome manner representing certain writers in their own as "the most perfect characters of the "age;" but who, however distinguished for their talents, were equally distinguished for their time-serving political and religious principles, and for their court sycophancy and adulation. Mr. Robinson's plan of lectures contains a statement of *facts*, and *principles*, which however they may be misrepresented and reviled, cannot be confuted. That he is severe throughout is readily acknowledged; but what is it that gives this severity its peculiar sharpness? *Truth*, and *truth* ONLY! The books recommended by the author in the last page of the work, afford ample evidence of the justice of what he has advanced; and I am sorry to add, that in spite of increasing light and knowledge, and the liberal spirit of the times, and although the policy of our civil governors has chained the monster persecution, yet even the present age adds to the mass of evidence handed down by history, of the corruption and intolerance which constitute the *original sin*, and habitual depravity of established churches. The numerous falsehoods, and innumerable equivocations on the subject of ecclesiastical subscription, all of which, even those adopted by the most evangelical of the clergy, and which bid defiance not only to that purity which is the very foundation of christianity, but that common honesty inculcated by the light of nature,—the conduct of the clergy respecting

the disgraceful riots at Birmingham;*—their attachment expressed to popish establishments at one period, and their cry of "no popery" at another, thus following the will and pleasure of the administration of the day:--these modern examples of intolerance and servility add additional strength to our author's arguments. In short, however widely I might differ from the opinions of a late high church prelate, Bishop *Horsley*, I most cordially agree with his right reverend lordship in his character of this, together with another popular tract (Mr. Palmer's catechism) written in support of the same glorious cause.—"These are tracts, cheap "in price, rich in matter, and which should be "gotten by heart, by every one who wishes to "be thoroughly acquainted with the principles of "nonconformity."†

Mr. Robinson to illustrate more fully his plan to his own congregation, gave lectures in the vestry of his meeting house, and went through the

* See--Memoirs of Dr. Priestley, p. 157, &c. and the *Second part of his Appeal* in which he brings "specific charges "against the clergy of Birmingham, and other persons by "name, proving them to have been the promoters and abet-"tors of the riot." One of these charges, and which stands uncontradicted, is stated as follows:—"At a dinner of all "the prebendaries of a cathedral church, the conversation "turning on the riots in Birmingham, and on a clergyman "having said that if I were mounted on a pile of my publica-"tions, he would set fire to them, and burn me alive, they "ALL declared *they would be ready to do the same!*"

† Remarks on the Test Act, &c.

whole in a manner, which, as some who attended have informed me, afforded his audience inexpressible entertainment and instruction. It is much to be lamented that these lectures were not taken down and printed. It would be doing an important service to genuine christianity, if some person of ability, zeal, and fidelity would follow the method recommended and practised by the author.*

In 1779,† Mr. Robinson published—*An Essay on the composition of a sermon: translated from the original French of the Rev. John Claude, minister of the French reformed church at Charenton: with notes, in 2 large volumes* 8vo. The circumstances which gave rise to this work are thus related by our author in a letter to a friend. "I "had the misfortune by a fall from a coach, to "sprain my ankle. This laid me long aside from "my public labours, and deprived me of what "*above all things in the world, I loved, frequent* "*preaching lectures in the villages, where mem-*"*bers of my congregation lived.* I endeavoured "to console myself, and assist my brethren, by "revising, enlarging and publishing this essay. "To this several gentlemen advised me, and at "the same time Christopher Anstey, Esq. of Bath,

* Vol. IV. p. 253—256.

† The title page bears this date, but it was published towards the close of 1778. It is a common practice to date books published in November and December, the year following.

" generously offered me the use of the large libra-
" ry of his good father, the late Dr. Anstey; and
" my good friends Mrs. and Miss Calwell,* both
" generous benefactors to our education-society
" at Bristol, where pious young men, recommend-
" ed by our churches, are prepared for the mini-
" stry, liberally furnished me with every accomo-
" dation, hoping, as the excellent tutors of that
" society have been pleased to think, that the
" essay might be of great advantage also to their
" pupils."

The preface to the first volume of the *Essay* consists of *Memoirs of the life of the author*, who is justly styled the " inestimable John Claude;" who for his learning and piety was one of the glories of that noble host of confessors, many of whom were murdered in their own country, and the rest banished by that ambitious, perfidious, cruel tyrant Lewis XIV. If the style in which these memoirs are written is somewhat less polished than that of the memoirs prefixed to the first volume of Saurin's sermons, it is more fervid: the encomiums on civil and religious liberty, the detestation of tyranny in church and state which run through the whole, are expressed in such language as must animate the soul of every christian reader. The preface to the second volume is

* These ladies who were the warm and generous friends of Mr. Robinson, came to reside at Dr. Anstey's house at Trumpington, a village two miles from Cambridge, in 1777.

styled—*A Brief dissertation on the ministration of the divine word by public preaching*, and which although only a sketch of a larger work designed by the author, contains a concise history of the pulpit from the earliest ages to the present; concerning which we may borrow his language. "The history of the pulpit is curious and "entertaining: it has spoken all languages, and "in all sorts of style. It has partaken of all the "customs of the schools, the theatres and the "courts of all countries where it has been erected. "It has been a seat of wisdom and a sink of non-"sense. It has been filled by the best and the "worst of men.* This preface is enriched with a variety of instructive and spirited reflections on the most important events in the history of churches ancient and modern. The account of primitive christianity, the constitution of christian societies, the equality of their members, their plain unadorned mode of worship, if seriously attended to by christian ministers, might have the happy effect of somewhat lowering those high ideas of *sanctity of office* which, it is to be feared, is the principal *sanctity* possessed by some would-be *Rabbies* in the church who can scarcely brook contradiction. What renders the *Essay* peculiarly valuable is the translator's notes, which constitute the greater part of the volumes, and which contain an inexhaustible source of entertainment,

* Vol. I. p. 226. † Ibid. p. 250—262.

not only to clerical but to lay readers. Specimens of all sorts of sermons, good, bad, and indifferent, from the very best to the very worst are therein exhibited. Two editions of the translated *Essay* have been since published; one by the Rev. Charles Simeon, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, who affecting to despise the notes, gave to his clerical brethren, doubtless by way of exemplification of the rules of Mr. Claude, a few *hundreds* of " skeletons" of his own sermons. In the other bastard edition, published likewise by a clergyman, who concealed his name, by far the major part of the notes are omitted. Mr. Robinson's edition although a large one, two thousand copies, has not met with the reception a work of such sterling merit deserved. During his life time its sale was slow: after his death it fell into different hands, and the paltry art sometimes practised of printing new title pages, with the words *second*, and *third edition*, was adopted. Copies are at length become scarce; and if the tutors of dissenting academies, the students under their care, and preachers in general are duly sensible of the value of the work, it will not be long before another edi- is called for.

In 1781, our author published—*The general doctrine of Toleration applied to the particular case of free communion.* For some time previous to the appearance of this pamphlet the subject of mixed communion had been controverted by some of the most respectable ministers of the baptist

denomination. Messrs. Ryland of Northampton, Turner of Abingdon, and Browne of Kettering, had pleaded the right of christians who might not perceive it their duty to submit to adult baptism, to church fellowship with their baptist brethren. Others argued for their exclusion. The most zealous of the latter class was the late Mr. Abraham Booth, who had recently published *An Apology for the Baptists*, and which affords a sad instance of the mistakes to which good men are in this mortal state too frequently liable: such is the dogmatism and uncharitableness which blemish the performance, so calculated was it to divide the christian world, and such astonishment did it raise in the minds of some of the author's friends, that one of them I have just mentioned, and for whom as the instructor of my youth, I shall ever retain a grateful remembrance, Mr. Ryland, when Mr. Booth's performance first made its appearance, made use of, in my hearing, this emphatic expression:—"If there were but one stump of a "pen, and one thimble full of ink left in the "church, they ought to be used in answering "Mr. Booth's book." Notwithstanding the severe charges which the author threw out against his brethren, of being "innovators, wishing to anni-"hilate the ordinances of Christ, neither baptists, "nor pædobaptists, but an heterogenous mixture "of both;" so much was Mr. Booth respected on account of his abilities and general character, that there does not appear to have been a repl:

made to him but what was written in a spirit of christian candour and liberality, a spirit totally opposite to that which reigns in the *Apology*. Mr. Robinson's piece is distinguished for the firmness with which he maintained his sentiments as a baptist, the arguments by which he vindicated the right of his differing brethren to church fellowship, the respect shewn to his opponents, and the novel and beautiful illustrations of his subject. The picture drawn towards the close, of the meeting of a strict baptist church, the application for admission on the part of some of the most illustrious pædobaptists, the feelings of the church on the occasion, form such a powerful appeal to the heart of every sincere christian, that I may safely pronounce it unanswerable.*

Such was the christian politeness of our author, that previous to the publication of *The Doctrine of Toleration*, he sent a copy of it to Mr. Booth, requesting that if he had mistated any of his sentiments he might be informed accordingly, to which no answer was returned;—that is no *private* answer, for not long afterwards Mr. Booth thought proper first to misrepresent, and then to revile our author in such a manner, as to make one wish what he had written, for the honour of his character, for ever blotted from his writings. Mr. Robinson's gentle mode of reasoning appears, instead of softening to have increased Mr. Booth's roughness

* Vol. III. p. 188—192.

and asperity. Whether the latter was conscious of his inability to answer the arguments of his opponent I will not take upon me to affirm; but it is notorious, that instead of attempting an answer, he fell to reviling, and openly charged him with "being the advocate of error, who rather than "fail to carry his point, had committed an act "of high treason against the majesty of eternal "truth, encouraging rebellion against her salutary claims, on the understandings, the consciences, and the hearts of men:"* and in what, gentle reader, did this treasonable offence against truth, committed by Mr. Robinson, consist?—Why truly, in the assertion—*That there is no moral turpitude in mental errors*, or as the author explained and applied it to the controversy in hand:—"The candidate for fellowship, who has examined "believer's baptism by immersion, and cannot "obtain evidence of the truth of it, is indeed in a "state in which his knowledge is imperfect; *but* "*his imperfection is innocent, because he hath* "*exercised all the ability, and virtue he has, and*

* Pædobaptism examined &c. 1st. Ed. p. 462. 2d. Ed. Vol. II. p. 514—520.

Dr. Williams's masterly defence of Infant baptism 2 vols. 12mo. written in reply to Mr. Booth, will it is hoped, prove an effectual check to that dogmatical arrogance which abounds in the *Pædobaptism examined*, as well as in the *Apology for the baptists*. The admirable chapter in Dr. Williams's work, on *Analogical reasoning* proves that Mr. Booth, when arguing on that part of the subject, takes the precise ground of the Roman catholic writers in their controversy with protestants!

" *his ignorance is involuntary; yea perhaps he* " *may have exercised ten times more industry and* " *application, though without success, than many* " *others who have obtained evidence*····THIS IS " A CASE OF INVOLUNTARY ERROR, AND THERE " IS, THERE CAN BE NO MORAL TURPITUDE IN " IT." And is not this a truth, I will venture to demand, inculcated by reason, and that forms the prominent feature of revelation? Yea, I will further demand—Whether the Almighty governor of the universe at the last day, " who will be clear " when he judges," will not judge his rational creation, by the rules of eternal justice and mercy, not condemning any one for involuntary error, but solely for errors from which they had the means of freeing themselves, and the guilt of which was visible in their conduct? This subject is admirably treated in the preface to the third volume of Saurin's sermons, as well as in the pamphlet on Toleration.* It cannot but excite surprise that Mr. Booth should so grossly misrepresent our author as " the enemy of truth, and the patron of er- " ror," when at the very time, he was refuting his

* The same subject was particularly discussed early in the last century by a learned divine of the established church, Dr. Sykes, in a tract entitled—*The Innocency of Error asserted and vindicated.* This tract passed through several editions. Should it ever be re-printed, would it not be best to entitle it *The Innocency of* involuntary *Error, &c.* This being the author's meaning, and there being so many who without this explanatory word, are so liable to misunderstand the phrase.

charges by various quotations from Mr. Robinson's writings, all expressive of the plainness and the importance of revealed truth; from which it is evident that Mr. Booth did not himself understand the subject, and that the gross mistake he made arose from his not perceiving the very wide difference between *voluntary* and *involuntary* error, although it was most clearly explained in the very pamphlet before him. The sentiments advanced by Mr. Robinson respecting the *innocency of mere mental error*, after all the abuse cast on its author, is nothing more than had been previously advanced by the first rate orthodox divines. One example from a great man may suffice. Saurin, treating of the nature of *evidence*, justly observes as follows: "The blessed God, who is less in-"clined to punish than to pardon, *will never* "*impute to his creatures, the errors of an invin-*"*cible ignorance.* Without this consideration I "own, although I am confirmed in believing my "religion by the clearest evidence, yet my con-"science would be racked with continual fears, "and the innumerable experiences I have had of "the imperfection of my knowledge would fill me "with horror and terror, even while in the sin-"cerest manner I should apply my utmost atten-"tion to my salvation."*

* Sermons. Vol. II. *On the Sufficiency of Revelation.* There are likewise some very fine remarks illustrative of this subject, interspersed in those admirable discourses in Vol. VII. *On the delay of Conversion.*

There is one view of the subject of *mixed communion*, which to me has always been conclusive in favour of the practice. Our baptist brethren allow many who differ from them to be excellent christians: they hear pædobaptist ministers with pleasure, and their pastors make them welcome to their pulpits: they rejoice in the prospect of associating with them in eternity. Is it not therefore the height of absurdity to refuse them the right hand of fellowship in an imperfect church on earth, when they are firmly persuaded their great Lord and Master will admit these rejected brethren, members of the perfect church of the *new Jerusalem* above?* Mr. Booth is now a member of

* In the metropolis the evils resulting from the practice of strict communion, although they sometimes occur, may not be frequent, but in the country it is otherwise. I recollect two instances, one at Cambridge, the other in the village where I now reside; where the persons applied for a dismissal from Mr. Booth's church: they were refused for no other reason, than that the churches which proposed to receive them, although baptist churches, admitted of mixed communion! That the evil does occur sometimes in London, I myself am an instance. I once applied for admission into a baptist church, when I was informed I could not be admitted unless I was baptised by immersion—that is, unless I, before God and the world, renounced that baptism, which after serious and I hope impartial examination, I judged to be valid. Many of the country churches are on this point growing wiser. That church in th emetropolis will set a noble example, which shall be the first to "burst their bonds asunder," and throw down that "partition wall" which divides them from their brethren.

that church, where I doubt not he has joined the society of the man whose sentiments he so strangely misunderstood, whose sphere of usefulness he narrowed, and who by his means, principally, had his days embittered by being driven from the society, and excluded from the pulpits of many of the brethren of his own denomination, with whom he had long been in the habits of social and christian friendship.*

* After having noticed the most respectable of Mr. Robinson's revilers, the reader will scarcely pardon me for introducing the most contemptible of them; but whose popularity in his denomination, and whose recent repetition of the calumnies cast on Mr. Robinson, must be my apology. In a *Memoir* of Mr. Booth, incorporated in an address delivered at his interment by the Rev. John Rippon, D. D. (yes reader, *Doctor of Divinity!*) the doctor amidst a mass of bombastic flattery, and which the deceased would have been the first most heartily to abominate, thus expresses himself:—"It "seems of consequence to mention how faithfully and per- "severingly he [Mr. Booth] contended for those doctrines, "some years since, at a time, *when the idea of the innocency* "*of mental error was fast gaining ground;* when candour and "liberality were terms employed in favour of none but those "who discovered a total indifference, or a radical enmity to "the grand truths of the gospel, when all catechisms and "creeds and systems were execrated, except such as boldly "or *covertly* were in the interests either of the Sabellian, the "Arian, or the Socinian heresy. Yea, he nobly maintained "his ground when for a while he was by the general appear- "ance, induced to fear, that he should have stood almost "alone in support of the cause of God and truth. Yes, then "we remember him, at our monthly meeting of ministers, on "that text,—*Buy the truth and sell it not;* stating with an

In 1782, Mr. Robinson published—*A Political Catechism: intended to convey in a familiar manner just ideas of good civil government, and the British constitution.* This tract was written at

" energy of mind, and a force of argument never to be for-
" forgotten, THAT IF ERROR IS HARMLESS TRUTH MUST
" BE WORTHLESS: and with a voice for him unusually ele-
" vated, declaring that every partisan of the innocency of
" mental error is a criminal of no common atrocity, but
" guilty of high treason against the majesty of eternal truth."
Passing over the compliment the doctor pays himself and his Rev. brethren, that they were all in danger,(except Mr. Booth) of " deserting the cause of God and truth," I will affirm, that the assertions;—"That candour and liberality were employed in
" favour of none but those who discovered an indifference or
" radical enmity to the truths of the gospel," and that " *all*
" catechisms &c. were execrated *except* such as boldly or co-
" vertly were in the interests" of the sects he mentions, are falsehoods! All Mr. Robinson's writings, and particularly the *preface to the 3d. Vol. of Saurin*, and the *Doctrine of Toleration*, in which what I will call the grand truth of reason and revelation, THE INNOCENCY OF MERE MENTAL ERROR, is maintained, are so clear, that it must be ignorance, or something worse, which prevents the reader from plainly perceiving that Mr. Robinson's design was to promote union, candour, and forbearance, amongst christians of different doctrinal sentiments: the very first page of the *preface* alluded to will shew the vileness of Dr. Rippon's slander! The system Mr. R. was, at that period at least, most attached to, was *moderate Calvinism.* His friendships were then chiefly with Calvinists. Notwithstanding the heat which in the pulpit so transported Mr. Booth, it requires no great sagacity to discover, that ERROR in certain cases,—when remaining in those whose hearts are termed by our Saviour HONEST and GOOD, *may* be *harmless*, which was all that Mr. Robinson had maintained; to which

the time the *North* administration was discarded from the councils of their sovereign for that of the Marquis of Rockingham. "To support the sys- "tem" professed by "the latter, to dissemmi-

we may add, that TRUTH when *held in unrighteousness* must be *worthless*. The nonsense therefore already noticed, about "atrocious high treason against the majesty of eternal truth," falls to the ground. How justly did Mr. Robinson sometime afterwards complain of Mr. Booth and of those whose minds he had poisoned on this subject, in a letter to a moderately orthodox dissenting brother.—"I have been seven weeks in "London; my own party treated me with neglect, and even "preached against me in my presence, about mental error, "which 'ita Dii me ament,' *not a soul of them understands!*"

It is not undeserving notice, that Dr. Rippon himself for a considerable period *after* Mr. Robinson had published the obnoxious sentiment, ranked amongst his warmest admirers, boasted of his friendship, and opened his pulpit to him on all occasions: but as soon as Mr. Robinson became unpopular with his brethren, the doctor very readily turned with the tide. His conduct as a christian minister in this instance was similar to his recent conduct as a politician. It is notorious to his acquaintance and his congregation, that during the last war, he distinguished himself by such strong language of reprobation of the measures of administration, that some of his friends were alarmed on his account: but no sooner had he an opportunity of preaching before Mr. PITT's volunteers at the *Drum-head,* than he veered about to the opposite point of the compass, congratulated the British empire on its "BEATI- "FIED state,"during the present reign, and expressed his hope that Mr. Pitt, as he had already proved a blessing to one half the world, might by being again called to the councils of his sovereign, prove a blessing to the other half! So much for the *consistency* and the *integrity* of this champion of orthodoxy and loyalty, this calumniator of Mr. Robinson!

" nate safe political principles, to place public " happiness on its true base—public political vir- " tue, which are the duties of all good citizens," were the motives which induced our author " to

Amidst the high flown panegyricks which the doctor has heaped on the memory of Mr. Booth, there is one thing, which, somehow or other has escaped him, but of which *he* ought to be reminded. It is well known that the deceased held in peculiar abhorrence that species of pulpit buffoonery which consists in taking single words for a text, and playing on them throughout a sermon. On this subject Mr. Booth in his sermon—*The Amen to social prayer illustrated and improved*, thus expresses himself.—" When I first heard this detached and sin- " gle word was allotted for me, I could not forbear to hesitate: " because I have long detested the thought of selecting any " part of sacred scripture to be the subject of *a trial of skill* " in order to excite popular curiosity, and to afford amuse- " ment: for such conduct deserves the most marked repro- " bation; as being a disgrace to the pulpit, and a profanation " of the sacred ministry." Similar remarks likewise occur in what I agree with Dr. Rippon is an " invaluable work," and which I have before quoted—*An Essay on the kingdom of Christ*. How strange is it that the doctor should so soon have forgotten the repeated admonitions of his great " reverend, " apostolic minister," as to be punning on his christian name in the very sermon preached on his decease. " *They which be of* " *faith are blessed with faithful* Abraham." It would not have exceeded some of the doctor's pulpit feats, had he singled out another text for the sirname *Booth*, which it is a wonder he did not discover in more than one passage of scripture. It is hoped the doctor will for the future pay greater attention to the writings of his favourite, and that he will not, after reading the passages to which I have referred him, and having " beheld " his face in a glass, go his way, and straightway forget what " manner of man he was."——Many of my readers will I fear,

" endeavour to attract the attention of youth on " this subject."* The catechism is written with much ingenuity and originality, and peculiarly calculated for the instruction as well as entertainment of young people. This work as well as the *preface* to the *Plan of lectures,* one of his *Village Discourses,*† and his sermon entitled—*Christian submission to civil government,*‡ afford ample evidence of the soundness of his principles as a friend to civil government in general, and to that form of civil government, the British constitution, in particular: indeed some of his encomiums on the privileges of Britons, are expressed in such flattering terms, as, after " seeing what we have " seen," one may almost question their justice. Had our author lived to behold the awful events which have occurred under the unprincipled and profligate administration of PITT,—the numerous violations of the constitution, and of the civil rights

feel somewhat displeased at my bestowing so long a note on such a person. My apology must be—the popularity of the doctor in his own denomination—his being the successor of that learned and excellent man (what a contrast)Dr. Gill—his having been chosen by the first, the largest, and most respectable baptist church in London, if not in the kingdom, the late Mr. Booth's, to deliver the funeral oration over their deceased pastor ! ! !—And the mischief that his farrago of bigotry and calumny " the short memoir," is calculated to effect in the christian world.

* Preface to the 3d. Ed. Works. Vol. II. p. 257. † Discourse III. On Contentment with Providence. ‡ Works. Vol. III. p. 289.

of his countrymen, the vast and enormously increased influence of the crown, the lavish expenditure of the blood and treasure of the nation in wars characterised by wickedness and folly,—the events which have taken place under the *present* administration, the arrest of the progress of toleration in her glorious course,—that act, unparalleled in the history of civilized nations, for its meanness, injustice, perfidy, and cruelty, the invasion of the neutral and unsuspecting Danes, the slaughter of the inhabitants, the conflagration of their capital, the robbery of their fleet and arsenals —Had our author been the witness of these horrid events, together with the degeneracy and supineness of the people, his high panegyricks on the felicity of Britons, would doubtless have been somewhat lowered: that constant and warm reprobation he expressed of the measures of Lord North, must have been not only continued, but increased, under the administration of statesmen, who have proved, unhappily for the British empire and for Europe, that they possessed all the bad, without any of the good qualities of their unfortunate predecessor.

Mr. Robinson was not the mere theoretical politician, nor did he, as stated by Mr. Dyer, "admire *King Log* in the English form of government." He justly considered the constitutional prerogatives of a British sovereign as real, effective,

* Memoirs. p. 233.

and calculated to promote the liberties and the general welfare of the people. As a christian minister he avoided the extremes, of introducing party politicks in the pulpit, and leaving the people uninstructed in the nature of their rights and duties, under the pretence that "the pulpit had nothing to do with politicks,"—a pretence always ridiculous, and generally hypocritical, it being notorious that the sycophantick priests who have most loudly professed to act on this principle, have the most frequently violated it.

In 1786, Mr. Robinson published *Sixteen Discourses on several texts of Scripture, addressed to Christian Assemblies, in Villages near Cambridge: to which are added six Morning Exercises.* There are various circumstances attending the preaching and publishing these truly original sermons not undeserving notice. The following account given by the author in the preface, of the *times* and *places* in which they were delivered, serves to shew his own indefatigable industry, and his constant and habitual care to employ those great and useful talents entrusted him by Providence, for the welfare of every part of his flock, and for the benefit of the lowest ranks of society.

"The protestant dissenting congregations at "Cambridge, from the first forming of them, have "always consisted, besides inhabitants of the "town, of a great number of families, resident "in the adjacent villages. In these last families, "there have always been children and servants,

" aged and infirm persons, who could attend the " public worship in town only occasionally, some " once a month, on the lord's-supper-day, others " once a quarter, and the very aged only once or " twice in the summer. It hath, therefore, been " the constant practice of their teachers, in com- " pliance with their own desire, to instruct them " at their own towns about once a month. In " some there are houses fitted up on purpose; and " in others, barns, in summer, when they are " empty, and, in winter, dwelling-houses answer " the same end: when either have been too small " to accommodate the auditors, as they often have " been on fine evenings, the preachers have stood " abroad in an orchard or a paddock, or any " convenient place. The following discourses are " a few of many which have been delivered in such " places. They are printed, as nearly as can be " recollected, as they were spoken.

" In some places, and in some seasons, the " teacher hath tarried all night, and half an hour " early in the morning hath been employed in de- " votion, and giving instruction. The short dis- " courses, called for distinction sake, Exercises, " were delivered at such times. It was usual, " too, before sermon in the evening, to catechise " the children, by hearing them read a short " scripture-history, and questioning them about " the sense of it."

The manner in which these discourses were afterwards prepared for the press affords a remarka-

ble instance of the author's powers of recollection: they were written by his relative and amanuensis Mr. Curtis, to whom Mr. Robinson, while sitting, or walking about the room smoaking his pipe, dictated every sentence, the texts of scripture, stops, the different characters, italicks, capitals, &c. They were then revised by the author; but little alteration was made in any of them, before they were sent to the press.

This volume may be pronounced an *unique:* the discourses are admirably adapted to teach people of all classes, to think for themselves on the most important truths of revelation: they are so plain that they may be understood by a person of the most limited capacity, at the same time persons of education *must* be edified in the perusal. They abound in natural eloquence; and there are passages which for simplicity and beauty united, may vie with the most celebrated writings of the age.* Although there are occasional expressions which may offend the ears of a polite audience, they are not in the preacher's usual style; they were purposely adopted to suit the most illiterate, ignorant, and lowest class of the human race.

The manner in which Mr. Dyer has attempted to degrade the merit of these discourses, and the author's other works, is as futile, as it is unworthy of the writer. These sermons he observes "are

* See in particular, Discourses, II. III. p. 37, 38, 53, 54, Ed. 1805. Also the Morning Exercise—*Industry.*

" distinguished by a kind of aukward and spurious " orthodoxy—such sentiments and language as even " Calvinists might think *savoury meat*, and such as " heretics could sit down to with pleasure; some- " times the preacher talks like *a child of grace*, at " others so much like *the pupil of nature, that some* " *have scarcely considered him a believer!* In " short these sermons exhibit, *what many of our* " *author's works exhibit*, a man attempting to re- " concile incongruities, and to perform impossibi- " lities. . . . . A *Calvinist* and *Socinian* might unite " in saying of them what the ingenious author of " the Indian Cottage says of error:—*I cannot bet-* " *ter compare it, than to the glare of a fire which* " *destroys the dwellings that it enlightens.*"*

Such remarks as these only serve to shew that a sceptic is by no means qualified to judge of the writings of a christian divine. That there may

* Mr. Dyer, in order to persuade his readers that Mr. Robinson was " much like a pupil of nature, (in plain language an *infidel*) scarcely to be considered as a believer," refers us to the sermon—*The christian religion easy to be understood*, and desires us to compare it with the *confession* of the *Savoyard Curate* in *Rousseau's Emilius*. After comparing the one with the other, I beg leave to assert, that Mr. Dyer could not have referred to evidence which more completely refutes what he has advanced than that contained in the *sermon* and the *confession*. The *confession* is a mass of contradictions, and the work of a professed infidel. One instance amidst many which might be adduced, shall suffice to prove how unfortunate Mr. Dyer has been in referring to such documents. The division of Mr. Robinson's discourse is as follows.—*Christianity is not a secret but a revealed religion—All of you are capable of understanding*

be a difference in sentiment, in two or three passages, from what the author expressed in some of his former writings, is readily acknowledged; but these are comparatively trifling, and by no means affect the great truths of christianity. Nothing can warrant the insinuations against Mr. Robinson's character as a sincere christian: if "some "have considered him scarcely as a believer," the "some" are, it is not improbable, confined to Mr. Dyer, and to two or three Calvinists and Socinians, who must be pleased with the efforts of their ally to persuade the world that Mr. Robinson was scarcely an honest man; for it is impossible he could be such, if while preaching and writing these discourses he was not very firmly convinced of the truth and importance of christianity. Sneering at that exalted devotion which is one chief excellence of the discourses, may be in character with a writer who has no idea of *the love of*

it—and there is every reason in the world why you should apply yourselves to the thorough knowledge of it . . . . There is nothing in christianity but what might be understood if it were properly attended to. What says the Savoyard curate? After some fine encomiums on the morality of the gospel, he adds—*Avec tout cela, ce meme evangile est plein des choses incroyables, de choses qui repugnent á la raison, et qúil impossible a tout homme sensé de concevoir ni d'admettre:*—positions which it was the express design of Mr. Robinson in the above sermon to refute and expose. That Mr. Dyer had read both the *sermon* and the *confession* I cannot doubt; but he must surely have forgotten the contents of the one or the other, or both, when he wrote the above remarks.

God shed abroad in the heart, or of a minister's preaching, writing, and acting under the *constraining* influence of *the love of Christ.* There are many however, who heard some of these as well as other discourses of our author, whose understandings enlightened, and whose affections raised, however they may be ridiculed as "chil- "dren of grace, fond of savoury meat," by those who speak of what they understand not, reflect with satisfaction and delight, on hours when their feelings were similar to those of the two disciples while conversing with our Saviour after his resurrection:—*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*

The preface to the Village Sermons contains an explanation of the circumstances which attended their delivery, designed as an apology for their peculiarities: the author illustrates his grand design by a tale in which the principal characters are a quaker and a roman catholic; a tale so beautiful and affecting, that there are I believe few persons of christian sensibility who can read it with dry eyes. With respect to the different human explanations of doctrinal points which generally prevail amongst christians, the author confirms the opinion he had given some years before in the *preface* to the third volume of Saurin, and in his *Doctrine of Toleration &c.* that "they "ought not to be considered of such importance "as to divide christians by being made standards

" to judge of the truth of any man's christianity:
" he thinks virtue and not faith the bond of union,
" though he supposes the subject ought to be pro-
" perly explained. His design therefore in these
" discourses was to possess people of a FULL CON-
" VICTION of the truth of a few facts, the belief of
" which he thought would produce virtue, and
" along with that personal and social happiness."
He adds—" His ideas of this subject do not
" meet the views of some of his brethren: *but*
" *while he wishes they may enjoy their own senti-*
" *ments, he hopes they will not deny him their*
" *friendship because he hath it not in his power*
" *to think as they do.*" What the author so feelingly deprecates, soon came to pass: this excellent volume of sermons, so very superior to all other *Village Sermons*, with the equally excellent preface, served the more effectually to deprive him of the friendship of those he had long esteemed, and to convert some of them into open enemies: what a melancholy instance of the little influence of the genuine spirit of christianity on the ministers of his own denomination! But no misrepresentation, no slander could prevent the increasing reputation the author was acquiring by this publication: the edition was shortly out of print; and since his death there have been published four large impressions; with an additional sermon, prepared by him for the press, entitled—*No man may punish Christ's enemies but himself;* and which for the grandeur of its sentiments, and

the commanding energy of its language, may rank amongst his noblest compositions.

Mr. Robinson printed, at different times, single sermons preached on public occasions, most of them at the request of his auditors. These discourses are distinguished by their originality, simplicity, elegance, and heart-affecting piety. The reader who may be acquainted with the discourses of the most celebrated French preachers, catholic and protestant, will perceive how deeply our author had imbibed their spirit, and more particularly that of his favourite *Saurin:* he had indeed so habitually feasted on the discourses of that excellent divine, that his mind, like the worm on the leaf, had acquired their very colour and substance: not that he was the servile imitator, or even copyist: his discourses were not formed from any model, but were the entire production of his own intellect: they were much better suited to the capacities of a common audience than those of the pulpit orator at the Hague, part of whose audience consisted of princes and statesmen. Frequently after hearing Mr. Robinson, I have observed to my friends—"We have to day heard Saurin simplified." Several of his printed discourses were much abridged, but by their abridgment appear to disadvantage. The discourse entitled *Christianity a System of Humanity,** which may be lei-

* Vol. III. p. 267.

surely read in half an hour, took up an hour and twenty minutes in the delivery; and I believe, there was not one of the numerous and attentive audience present, who thought it too long. The *Discourse addressed to the congregation at Maze-Pond, on their public declaration of having chosen Mr. James Dore their pastor*, may be read in twenty minutes;* but the original was upwards of an hour long;—too long for that tedious service, a modern dissenting ordination, of which all the forms, although the *name* was avoided, were studiously preserved by the church at Maze-Pond. The subject of the discourse—*The Constitution of a christian church, and the principal sources of its corruptions*, was treated at considerable length: other persons besides myself, regretted it was not published as preached. That ingenious discourse—*The Christian doctrine of ceremonies*, (the justice of the criticism, must be left to the learned to determine:†)—That affecting discourse —*The Sufficiency of the Scriptures, preached in behalf of the society for distributing bibles in the army and the navy*,‡ judging from having first heard, and afterwards read them, were printed almost *verbatim* as they were delivered.

Mr. Robinson likewise frequently employed his pen on different occasions. He assisted the late learned and excellent Dr. Kippis in drawing up one of the articles in the *Biographia Britannica;*§

* Vol. IV. p. 24. † Vol. III. p. 312, 333—336.
‡ Vol. IV. p. 1. § Art. Baker.

and begun a translation of the *Revolution de Paris*, a periodical work of considerable merit, but of which three numbers only appeared in English: he drew up *A Plan of a charity school for the education of the boys and girls of protestant dissenters, at Cambridge:* the imperfect state of the translated work, and the plan of the charity school not being materially different from the plans of dissenting charity schools in general, render the insertion of these pieces in the present collection unnecessary.

I have thus laid before the reader some account of Mr. Robinson's works published during his life; but his two largest works—*The History of Baptism*, and *Ecclesiastical Researches*, each consisting of between six and seven hundred closely printed quarto pages, and which were only parts of a still larger work, sketched by the author, were not published till after his death. The merits of these works I am not qualified to discuss critically; and as I have already exceeded the limits intended when I first begun these Memoirs, my account of them must be brief.

Many of the principal persons of the Baptist denomination, had long lamented that they had no authentic history of their brethren, particularly of this country, and deeming *Crosby's History*, which had hitherto been the only one deserving attention, both inaccurate and ill-written, turned their thoughts to Mr. Robinson as a proper person.

to write such a work as might do honour to the denomination. Some of his London friends accordingly associated and formed a committee, the first meeting of which was held at the King's Head tavern in the Poultry, Nov. 6, 1781. Various resolutions were agreed to. Mr. Robinson was invited to undertake the work. Dr. Giffard the chairman, at that time librarian to the British Museum, offered him an apartment in his house for the purpose of consulting manuscripts. It was proposed that Mr. R. should visit London for ten days in every month, preach various lectures, and that a subscription should be entered into to defray his expences. Mr. Keene was appointed to write to Mr. R. and his church on the subject. This plan on its first proposal occasioned some uneasiness to the congregation at Cambridge, who feared that their pastor to whom they were so justly partial, and whom they had so long loved and honoured, might be tempted by the London dissenters to settle amongst them: but at length, after duly considering the matter, it was agreed to comply with the request. In the answer written by one of the deacons of the church, Mr. William Nash of Royston, it was, however, stipulated that the London committee should " neither directly " nor indirectly, promote any plan or scheme that " should eventually tend to remove their pastor, nor " yet to alter the plan, so that he should be absent " more than one Lord's day in a month."

Such was Mr. Robinson's popularity as a preacher, that as soon as it was understood he had agreed to visit London at stated periods, he was eagerly applied to for his services at different places: the multiplicity of his pulpit labours may be judged of by the following extract of a letter from his friend Mr. Keene.

"As in your favour of the 26th of March, you "desired me to adjust your preaching times, with "the approbation of your friends, they are as fol- "low:

"Tuesday evening,	April 15,	at Mr. Rippon's.
Thursday morning,	—— 17,	— Dr. Stafford's.
Lord's day morning,	—— 20,	— Dr. Rees's.
———— afternoon,	—— —	— Maze Pond.
———— evening,	—— —	— Little St. Helen's.
Monday evening,	—— 21,	— Maze Pond Vestry.
Tuesday evening,	—— 22,	— Mr. Rippon's.
Wednesday morning,	—— 23,	— Maze Pond."

Mr. Robinson's discourses, during his visits to to the metropolis, most of which I had the pleasure of hearing, were delivered to audiences equally crowded and attentive.

It may naturally be supposed that so much preaching, together with so much visiting in the social circle as it was impossible to prevent, afforded our author little leisure to examine manuscripts and write history. After a few months trial, his plan of studying in London was relinquished: but it was pursued at home; where he obtained through the kindness of some of the masters of arts in the university of Cambridge, not

only free access to the public library, but the privilege of having the books he wished to consult, conveyed to his own study. A subscription was entered into to enable the author to publish the work; and the list of subscribers proved to be numerous and respectable.

Mr. Robinson employed a considerable part of the remaining years of his life, except the last, when his health and spirits began to languish, in writing the *History of Baptism*, and *Ecclesiastical Researches*. Of the extent of his labours, and his assiduity, some estimate may be formed by his own account, as contained in letters to different friends.* The greatness of the work he had originally sketched, appears at times to have discouraged him, and he professes his incompetency for the purpose. Before he had half accomplished his task he writes to one of his friends—"I have had "loads of books from the university, and loads "more I must have." The following letter from a learned and respectable baptist minister, written after perusing a specimen of the *History*, sent him by the author, contains a just character of the work, and a prediction respecting it which appears to been accurately founded.

"Reverend Sir,

"From the specimen of your history of the "baptists, or rather of baptism, which you have "honoured me with, I really think, if my opi-

* Vol. IV. p. 235—245.

" nion were of any worth, that the work, when " finished, will be an important acquisition to " the republic of letters,—cast some rays of light " upon the dark regions of antiquity,—and by " stating indisputable facts, no matter whether " through the hands of Arians, Socinians, or Atha- " nasians, friends, or enemies, help an honest " enquirer in his search after truth; and, at the " same time, if I may be allowed to speak my " free sentiments, without the imputation of flat- " tery,(which I am very far from being inclined " to), be a lasting monument of the learned au- " thor's extensive reading, indefatigable industry, " and singular sagacity, in selecting proper mate- " rials for his subject. Under this conviction, I " heartily wish it may be laid before the public; " though my state of health for some time past " hath been such, as to render it very uncertain, " whether I may live to see the plan completed. " Of its general spread there seems to be little " doubt, considered only as a book of litera- " ture, to adorn the libraries of the learned and " curious.

" I am, Sir,

" Your Obedient Humble Servant,

" J. THOMSON."*

" *Clapham, June* 14, 1787."

* Mr. Dyer has called Mr. Thomson, first *John* Thomson; then *Joshua* Thomson: his christian name was *Josiah*.

The merits of the controversial part of the *History of Baptism*, as relating to the *mode* and the *subject*, I shall not attempt to discuss. Mr. Robinson considered the mode generally followed in his own denomination, of baptising transversely, by laying a person down backward under the water, a variation from the primitive mode. The latter he describes as follows:—"The administrator, "whether in or out of the water, stood on the "right side of the candidate, his face looking to "his shoulder. The candidate stood erect, and "the administrator, while he pronounced the bap-"tismal words, laid his right hand on the hind "part of the head of the candidate, and bowed "him gently forward, till he was all under water."* Mr. Robinson then proceeds to shew the figurative uses of this mode of baptism. On this part of the subject I beg leave to make one remark;—How cautious should the baptists be of censuring their brethren who may differ from them respecting any exclusive mode, when they themselves cannot determine what that exclusive mode was; and when one of the most learned of their body, and who had most laboriously investigated the subject, is of opinion, that the mode generally practised in their denomination was unknown to the primitive churches.

With respect to the *subjects* of baptism, our author has shewn much learning and ingenuity in his

* History of Baptism. p. 546.

endeavours to prove that the words *infants* and *little children*, mean, in the writings of the fathers, *youth* and *minors;* which, however, will not be considered as materially affecting the point in controversy, unless he had proved them to have such meaning exclusively.* Critics have remarked that he has overlooked the principal arguments urged by the best writers in favour of infant baptism.† What he has advanced appears by no means calculated to bring the controversy nearer to a conclusion. Happy, however, would it be for the christian church, if all those who hold different opinions on the subject of baptism, were like our author; who whilst he firmly maintained his own sentiments, as firmly maintained the right of his

* On the subject of *Minor Baptism* our author has the following excellent remarks: happy would it be for the rising generation, were they more attended to.

"By those who admit the propriety of *Minor Baptism* in "general (and there is nothing in it inconsistent either with "the dignity of divine revelation, or the perfect freedom of "man, for youth upwards of sixteen are at years of discre-"tion, and capable of judging of religion for themselves,) the "discipline [i. e. mode of instruction practised in ancient "times] might be easily revived. A month in the spring "would be well employed by ministers in giving lectures to "select assemblies of youth on the evidences of christianity, "and parents might easily engage their families to attend "them. One would embolden another, and the most disen-"gaged time of life would be granted them as the most eligi-"ble to put on a profession of religion, which is now hardly "considered as a duty expected to be done in some families."

† Encyc. Britan. *Art.* Robinson.

brethren who differed from him to all the privileges of christian fellowship; justly considering the "baptism of those who profess to believe in Jesus "Christ, *not a church ordinance*, but a profes- "sion of christianity at large," and of course that differences of opinion on the subject of baptism ought not to form a bar to church communion.

Mr. Robinson at the close of his preface to his *History*, appeals to the public respecting his motives in writing it, as follows:

"I feel happy on reflection that I did not set "about this work on any motives below the dig- "nity of a christian, nor am I aware that I have "prostituted my pen to serve a party, or once "dipped it in gall: escapes undoubtedly there are "many, but when did any individual of my species "produce a work of absolute perfection. Such as "it is I commend it to the candid perusal of my "brethren."*

* Dr. Priestley in his *Letter to an Antipædobaptist*, p. 24, charges Mr. Robinson with "maintaining that the Pelagians "denied infant baptism;" and on this account makes a serious attack on Mr. Robinson's veracity; an attack, which on examination, proves to be as unfounded as it is cruel.

"The *most likely opinion*" says Mr. Robinson, "is that Pe- "lagius did deny the baptism, but not the salvation of in- "fants." Speaking of Augustin he remarks—"Had he for- "got himself when he taxed the Pelagians with denying infant "baptism, and when he complains in another book of the "people who opposed it." Hist. of Bap. p. 210, 218.

Mr. Robinson it must be acknowledged is not accurate in his supposition respecting the opinion of either Pelagius or

The *History of Baptism*, except the recapitulation contained in the three concluding pages, and the preface, were finished a twelvemonth before the author's death; and the work was nearly printed off when that lamented event took place.

Augustin. The truth appears to be as follows. Some of the adversaries of Pelagius, Augustin and his disciples, had drawn as a consequence of his opinions (on the subject of *original sin*) that infants are not to be baptised. This consequence he warmly denies, and indignantly exclaims—" *Se ab* " *hominibus infamari quod neget parvulis baptismi sacramentum* " *&c.*—That he had been slanderously represented by men as " denying the sacrament of baptism to infants." He adds— " *Nunquam se, vel impium aliquem hereticum audisse qui hoc* " *quod proposuit de parvulis diceret:*—That he never heard, no " not even any impious heretic, who would say that which he " had mentioned: viz. That unbaptised infants are not liable " to the condemnation of the first man, and that they are not " to be cleansed by the regeneration of baptism." Pelagius used additional strong language to repel what he deemed a slanderous inference drawn from his sentiments, and imputed to him by his adversaries. See the passages quoted from *Austin de pec. origin. cap.* 17, 18. *And de pec. & merit. cap.* 6. together with a translation of them in that excellent tract—*The Baptism of Infants a reasonable service, founded upon Scripture and undoubted apostolic tradition, &c. By Micaiah Towgood.* 5th. ed. p. 39—41.

Mr. Robinson thus appears to have been mistaken in what he considered to be " the most likely opinion" of Pelagius, and in not attending to the difference between an opinion advanced by one writer, and an inference drawn from it by another, and which is not unfrequently, as in the instance alluded to, totally denied.

There are certain cogent reasons which ought to have made Dr. Priestley extremely cautious in attacking the veracity of another merely on account of his inaccuracy. In the first place,

The *Ecclesiastical Researches*, a work connected with the *History of Baptism* was published about two years after the death of the author. It commences with a general view of the Roman empire, and of Judea at the birth of Jesus Christ; and after an account of the new economy introduced by John the baptist, and a view of the ministry of our Saviour, proceeds to detail an history of the principal foreign churches of Christendom from their origin to the present period. This work was carried through the press by a distin-

the doctor himself in this very pamphlet has committed a mistake similar to that of Mr. Robinson's. He quotes Austin as saying "He never heard not even of any impious heretics, "who would say that baptism was not necessary to infants." *Letter, &c.* p. 19. whereas it appears by the quotations above cited, it was *Pelagius* who used this language, and not *Austin*. A learned friend has suggested to me as the original cause of Doctor Priestley's harsh language, a mistake which the doctor made by mis-quoting Mr. Robinson's reference, giving lib. I. instead of lib. II. It is likewise remarkable, that in the work in which the charge is brought against Mr. R. the doctor has made in the course of two pages no fewer than *four* mistakes in his quotations and references! Indeed it is well known to his most partial friends, that, owing to the haste in which he sometimes wrote, his references to the writings of the fathers were not always the most accurate.

It is a sad proof of the frailties to which even great and good men are subject, when they hastily advance serious charges against persons whom they habitually esteem. No man appears to have had a higher opinion of Mr. Robinson for his piety, his integrity, and his impartiality in searching after truth, than Doctor Priestley. See his *Sermon preached on the death of Mr. Robinson. passim.*

guished member of the university of Cambridge, Mr. WILLIAM FREND; who had long enjoyed the friendship of our author; a man who will be held in lasting remembrance as an able champion of religious liberty, and whose persecution has entailed indelible disgrace on the once famous *Whig* university, the principles of which were thoroughly corrupted under the administration of its most unworthy member—WILLIAM PITT. Mr. Frend in his corrections made no alteration in either the sentiments or the language of our author. In the preface he gives the following character of the work.

"The same subjects have occupied the attention of the best writers in all ages; but the prejudices of the times in which they lived, led them too frequently to extol the splendour of of an external church, and either to overlook or ill treat those sects, which under the denomination of hereticks, entertained juster notions of christianity. Our author has with indefatigable pains explored the records of antiquity, and proved that there never have been wanting men to stand up in defence of the gospel, and to oppose that spirit of domination and persecution which reigns in the romish, and the greater part of the protestant churches. Wherever that spirit appears, it is in the following pages justly reprobated.

"To those who have been charmed with the unassuming grace of Mr. Robinson in the pulpit,

" we have no doubt that this work, calling back
" to their minds the liveliness of his imagination,
" and the purity of his sentiments, will be highly
" acceptable; and others who have heard only of
" his fame will be happy to see here faithfully de-
" lineated, the character of a man who was both
" in action and principle, a zealous advocate for
" civil and religious liberty."

Although the two last mentioned works remain as monuments of the learning, the piety, the love of truth and of liberty of our author, it is to be lamented that, owing to their bulk, their circulation should be comparatively speaking, very limited; but it is impossible, perhaps, by any abridgment to do them justice.

Will the learned world forgive me for somewhat regretting that Mr. Robinson ever engaged in these laborious performances. They left him no time for composing smaller, but, judging from his other writings, more useful pieces. It is generally understood that in composing the two quarto volumes, he impaired his intellectual powers, lowered his spirits, injured his health, and hastened his end. Whether the cares of a numerous family, or any other circumstance might tend to accelerate this event, it is useless to enquire. It is certain that during the last year of his life he exhibited evident marks of decline, both bodily and mental. I saw him in London for the last time about three months before his death; and he might then have addressed his friends in the same language which

he addressed to one introduced to him a day or two before the solemn event took place:—"You "are come to see only the shadow of Robert Ro-"binson."

In the spring of the year 1790, Mr. Robinson engaged to preach the annual sermons for the benefit of the dissenters' charity school in Birmingham, and it was hoped that the excursion, and the company and conversation of his friends there, might have proved of service to his health and spirits. His physician did not disapprove of the journey, although, on account of the languor of his patient, he wished it could have been deferred a week or two longer. On Wednesday the second of June, he set out from Chesterton with his son in an open chaise, and travelling by easy stages, arrived at Birmingham on Saturday evening. He was so little fatigued with his journey, that on the Sabbath he preached twice; in the morning at the new, and in the afternoon at the old meeting house. His sermons it was remarked were much inferior to those preached at former periods of his life. On Monday evening he was seized with a great difficulty of breathing to which he had for some time been subject; his friends were alarmed for him: but on Tuesday he recovered, and the greater part of the day and the whole of the evening, his conversation was as easy and entertaining as usual. He ate his supper with a good appetite, and about twelve o'clock, without any complaint, retired to rest. On Wednesday morning he was found dead

in his bed, nearly cold: as the bed clothes were not at all discomposed, nor his features in the least distorted, it is probable, that he died without a struggle. The manner of his departure appears to have been that to which he had often expressed a preference. It was his desire to die " softly, " suddenly, and alone." Many eminent christians have expressed a similar desire, and have, by their heavenly father been taken to himself in a similar manner. It is, perhaps, best for the christian, with resignation and cheerfulness to leave it to infinite wisdom and goodness to determine *by what death he shall glorify God.* The death bed of the righteous not unfrequently presents a spectacle replete with instruction, more particularly to surrounding relatives. Were it not for this consideration, it is natural that sudden death should, by those who are habitually prepared, be an object of desire. Lingering sickness, dying agonies, the severe pangs of separation felt by those who have been connected by the dearest and closest ties—all these most distressing circumstances are avoided. The soul of the believer suddenly throws off mortality, and *puts on immortality!*

Mr. Robinson closed his mortal career, at the house of William Russell Esq. at Showell Green, near Birmingham: he was interred with every mark of respect in the dissenters' burying ground, several of the dissenting ministers of the town attending his funeral. On the following Sabbath Dr. Priestley improved the mournful event in a

funeral discourse, which he afterwards printed. Dr. Toulmin, then residing at Taunton, paid a similar tribute of respect to the memory of his friend. On the 27th. of the same month Dr. Rees of London preached two sermons to the congregation at Cambridge; the afternoon discourse turned on that delightful, that animating subject—*The union of good men in the future world;* from a text peculiarly calculated to impress the audience, as it was one of the last on which their deceased pastor had discoursed to them:—1. THES. ii. 19. *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

To the disgrace of those ministers both of the baptist and independent denominations, with whom Mr. Robinson had long been in the habits of friendship, and who with their congregations had been often edified by him from their respective pulpits, not one was found to offer to his memory a similar token of respect! No—the task was universally shunned by the *orthodox*, and left to be performed solely by the *heterodox!*

A glance at Mr. Robinson's character, in private and public life, with a few remarks, shall close these Memoirs.

In his FAMILY his conduct afforded a bright display of the amiable virtues. Some of Mr. Dyer's observations on this part of his character

are so beautifully expressed, that it would be injustice to omit laying them before the reader.

" Of filial affection he was a model. It is saying little to observe that he supported his mother [who survived him*] to a very advanced age: this he thought his highest honour. Nothing afforded him so much pleasure as to administer to her consolation in affliction, and to smooth the path of her declining years. He knew how prone old people are to dwell with delight on former transactions. Robinson met this natural inclination, by frequently conversing with his parent on subjects that engaged her early life; and the sight of an old friend, as it administered to his mother's gratification, was a cordial to his own bosom.

" In the conjugal relation, he was attentive and affectionate: and insinuations to the contrary have proceeded from mistakes, or were raised by insidious and designing men: by transient visitors his pleasantries may, sometimes, have been misinterpreted into severities; but the ruder passions were strangers to his heart. He might, indeed, to some, appear to keep too far aloof from the endearments of domestic life: and it is true, that various pursuits might, frequently, divide his attentions, and literary labours occasionally absorb his regards. But his breast could not be the seat of indifference;

* Mr. Robinson's mother died Sep. 1790, aged 93 years.—His widow is still living.

" no man was more capable of fixing the female " heart by manly affability, and by unaffected " sweetness."

In confirmation of these observations, I beg leave to mention the affectionate manner in which I have heard him speak, when absent from home, of his aged parent, his wife and his children, and the fervour with which he *always* prayed for them in public; tears at times accompanying his prayers. The letters which he wrote on the illness and death of his daughter *Julia*, finely demonstrate his sensibility, and parental affection.*

Mr. Dyer adds—" attentive to young people, " he was fond *even to weakness of children, parti-* " *cularly his own:*" a remark which may be readily excused in a bachelor, who has none of the warm blood of a parent flowing round his heart. If however, this parental fondness be a *weakness*, it is what the greatest and the best of men have been subject to: even wise and powerful monarchs have, by statesmen and ambassadors, been surprised rolling on the carpet with their children.

With respect to education, he was of opinion that young people acquire the most useful knowledge, and retain it longer, when discovered by their own observation and sagacity, than by the common modes of instruction. The walls of several of his rooms were covered with pictures, of no

* Vol. IV., p. 251, 264—268.

great pecuniary value, but replete with principles of instruction.—" Children," he would observe, " catch the most useful hints in their most un- " guarded moments." One of his favourite methods of instructing young people in religious knowledge was, by hearing them read a portion of sacred history, and then asking them questions, and conversing with them respecting its meaning: how much more useful such a method, than by teaching catechisms, containing dogmas, little better understood by the teacher than the learner; confirmed by pretended proofs from scripture, that is, detached scraps, too frequently forced from their proper place, and wrested from their original design.

Impartiality demands that it should be added, Mr. Robinson in his ideas of education was too romantic: he was apt to consider young people as formed of pure intellect, and to lose sight of the frailty of human nature. His system inclined to excessive indulgence, and the ill effects of it were not unobserved by his friends. The consciousness however, of his own superior powers, rendered him inattentive to hints which might have proved advantageous. A parent, whose affection is tempered by wisdom, ought constantly to bear in mind the absolute necessity of childhood and youth being subjected to a course of discipline; such a course as is laid down, and enforced by the wisest of men—*Solomon;* who, I should imagine, was as capable of judging on this important subject as some of our modern writers, who affect to

despise his admonitions. The example of the Great Parent of mankind in his conduct towards his rational creatures in general, and his favourite children in particular, should to earthly parents, be the constant, the careful object of imitation.

In the SOCIAL CIRCLE Mr. Robinson displayed all those qualities which render mutual intercourse pleasant and profitable. His memory was stored with anecdote; wit and humour were always at his command. The encomiums, the praises, the flatteries which at times were lavished on him did not appear to displease him: he could both receive and return adulation; and not even a *Chesterfield* could pay a more finely turned compliment. Dr. Doddridge expressed it as his opinion that—"The love of popular applause is a meanness, "which a philosophy far inferior to that of our "divine master might have taught us to con-"quer;"* and yet it is well known that the doctor himself, one of the greatest and best men that ever adorned the christian church, was like Mr. Robinson, subject to what in such men ought to be termed rather a foible, than a "meanness."† But the language of the satirist, it must be confessed, has some truth for its foundation:

> "Though 'tis a maxim of the schools,
> "That flattery's the food of fools,
> "Yet now and then your men of wit,
> "Will condescend to take a bit."

* Dedication to Dr. Watts, prefixed to—*The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.* † See Dr. Kippis's Life of Dr. Doddridge.

It may however be questioned whether in these cases, the flatterers are not chiefly to blame. The religious world has not unfrequently seen, ministers, more especially on their entrance on public life, hurt, if not spoiled, by the extravagant and foolish strains of adulation offered to them by the members of their congregations, and by their friends and acquaintance, male and *female*. That some apology may be made for the extraordinary attachment discovered by the ladies, to *young*, *reverend*, and *single* gentlemen, I shall not presume to deny; but I leave this important matter to be settled by those whom it may more immediately concern.

Mr. Robinson, although he might not be free from vanity, was by no means a proud man: on the contrary no one appears to have had so humble an opinion of his own services as himself: the language of deep humility which discovers itself on the most solemn occasions, in his sermons, when his sincerity cannot be suspected, excites in those who consider his great attainments, not only surprise but admiration.

Mr. Robinson had a soul peculiarly formed for FRIENDSHIP: his mind possessed a large fund of quick and refined sensibility: his heart knew nothing of "a cold medium," but glowed with zeal for the welfare of those he loved, and with resentment when his services met with an unworthy, or an ungrateful return: yet he never appears to have indulged an unrelenting, or an unforgiving disposi-

tion. I have known instances in which, although feeling he was the injured party, he was the first to seek reconciliation. The letters which appear in the fourth volume of these works display his talents at epistolary writing, and are a transcript of his soul.* The following letter which was not put into my hands till the volume was printed off, will be read with delight by every one who has a heart formed for that refined state of friendship, which will be enjoyed in eternity, by the good and the virtuous of all ages and nations.

Chesterton, April 7, 1786.

"Surprised!—No, I neither am nor ever shall "be at my friend W——, for appearing even bet- "ter than we had any right to expect. Goodness "of heart I think belongs to the very name···· "Forget! no, no; bad as my memory is, I shall "never lose a recollection of your country and "your family. But why will you irritate my pain "by pressing me to go where my affection would "first fly, but where my present circumstances

* I have selected some of his letters written on his tour to Scotland, the major part of which were dictated to his amanuensis, his son Robert. Concerning others, I observe with Mr. Dyer;—"Had we been writing for the amusement of Dr. "Johnson, we should have transcribed Robinson's letters "from Edinburgh;" in which certain *delicate* manners and customs of the old town are related with much humour. The city has since been considerably improved.

Mr. R. during this tour threw off the clerical exterior, and travelled in light coloured clothes, &c.

" will not allow me to indulge my wishes. To " what purpose should I write you a bead roll, a " catalogue of cases to be prayed for! The truth " is I happen to be so engaged at present that I " cannot stir: but if ever I can get an opportu- " nity I shall, without ceremony, embrace it with " the utmost pleasure. Not that I think (pardon " me) as you do, that I should do any more good " than other folks. This is your complaisance. .

. . . . . .

" ————I feel myself happy that the Village " Discourses meet with your approbation. They " certainly were never intended for such men as " you, who are too well instructed to need them. " They were meant as a sort of poor man's " broom to sweep his almshouse. I wish I could " persuade all the poor hereabouts to try to use " them. I have been forced to let go my hold, " and let them go into the world. . . . . .

. . . . . .

" What I admire (and you shall forgive me for " writing an effusion of my heart) what I admire " in you is your generous love to your fellow " creatures. This noble disposition is the founda- " tion of all virtue, the broad bottom on which a " man may erect a fabric of good works, the most " stately and magnificent in the world. This is the " second excellence. There is but one above it, " that is love of God. Shall we be in any dan- " ger of error by saying—*He that loveth his bro- " ther, whom he hath seen,* with all his poverty,

" infirmity, and disgraces about him, must love " God, whom he can never see arrayed in any- " thing but splendour and excellence? What sig- " nifies love to a cold proposition in a book if that " be all? What is domestic love confined within " the walls of the old manor house? It is but a " narrow circle: the manor itself, the county, the " kingdom, the world is too little for the love of " our species. This love rolls back through all " past ages, esteems Noah and Abraham, and all " primitive characters: this pushes forward, pe- " netrates into future times, and wishes all the " world may grow nothing but saints: this takes " the wings of fancy, quits this globe, calls on the " planets near, and then stretches on to those afar " off, and hopes every one is a temple where in- " telligent beings chant the creator's glory. Af- " ter all, his excellencies are above all blessing " and praise. This love is as humble as it is as- " piring, and thinks itself honoured when it can " pry out some forlorn, neglected soul, lost to " the world in some dark hole of distress. On the " sight of such objects, love to man exclaims, *who* " *is afflicted and I burn not?* If you do not feel " something like this, you have lost the family " likeness, and are nothing of a W——, but the " shadow and the name. My wife joins in wish- " ing every benediction to you and yours.

" I am, dear Sir,

" Yours most affectionately,

" R. Robinson."

As a CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPIST, his character shines with peculiar lustre. His mind was habitually employed in devising plans for the benefit of society, and of individuals; his life was one continued labour for the good of others: the wants, both temporal and spiritual, of the poorest, the very lowest rank of society lay near his heart: nothing appears to have afforded him greater delight than preaching in villages, barns, and cottages; on these occasions he would regale himself with the most humble fare of his poor brethren, taking care at the same time that they should lose nothing by their attentions. It was with him a maxim "that if a child but lisped to "give you pleasure you ought to be pleased." What a display of exalted goodness is exhibited in his conduct on his visits to the metropolis? Amidst his numerous engagements, when his company was courted not only by his own peculiar friends, but by the learned of different denominations; in the height of his popularity as a preacher, we find him attentive to the little errands of the poor. Amongst his papers were found a list of commissions to be executed on his visits to the metropolis; with several for his more wealthy friends were found the following—"Gown for "poor M——. M. M's. son to be seen. H. wishes "Mr. H. to be merciful. W. thinks his son's "wages are too small. Watts's hymns for T. H. "Testament for C." No man could appeal with more confidence to the great "shepherd and bi-

" shop of souls," in the language of Dr. Doddridge. (*Hymn* 246.)

> " Hast thou a lamb in all thy flock
> " I would disdain to feed?"

From the concise but awful account given us by our Saviour of the day of judgment, (Matt. xxv.) it appears, that fine abilities, great literary attainments, and splendid professions, will be deemed of no other account than as having occasioned greater responsibility in their possessors. The works that will then be produced as witnesses of the sincerity of our christian profession, are works of mercy, performed from a principle of love to God and to Christ. *Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me!*

Mr. Robinson was a man remarkable for his strict INTEGRITY. On his setting out in life, he, for the sake of a good conscience, lost the favour of a wealthy relative, and sacrificed all his worldly prospects. In his more advanced years, when his family was large, and his income slender, he had handsome offers of preferment frequently pressed on him, by certain dignitaries of the established church; and could his conscience have acquired a little of that clerical elasticity so conspicuous in her members; could he have been satisfied with the paltry plea—" The points of diffe-
" rence between conformists and nonconformists
" are only trifles about which wise and good men

" differ," he might have been raised to a state of easy affluence, if not of high dignity: but his grand ruling principle of action to his dying hour, appears to have been that, inculcated by one of our great moral poets:

> " What CONSCIENCE dictates to be done,
> " Or warns me not to do:
> " *This* teach me more than hell to shun,
> " *That* more than heaven pursue."

Few ministers of religion have been so well acquainted with the foundation principles of GOOD GOVERNMENT, or have inculcated such just sentiments of CIVIL and RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, as Mr. Robinson. His writings on these subjects, which evidently shew he had studied in the school of those great masters, MILTON and LOCKE, were enforced by his own example: he was ever ready to assist in public schemes for the promotion of those grand objects: he had the principal hand in forming, and was an active member of a *Society for Constitutional Information*, established at Cambridge, and which with many societies of a similar nature in different parts of the kingdom, whose principles were equally loyal and patriotic, continued to flourish, till they were slandered, discouraged, and at length overthrown under the PITT administration. With all the other friends to the best interests of mankind, he was a warm admirer of the French revolution, at the period when it shone in all its glory, under the direction of the national constituent assembly. He did not live to witness

those crimes by which it was afterwards obscured, the principal share of the guilt of which, rests on the heads of the coalesced sovereigns of Europe, for their most unprincipled attempt to destroy the liberties of France, and to invade, devastate, and divide the country; which attempt maddened the whole kingdom, and gave opportunity to a set of men assuming the name of republicans, but who were the enemies of all good government, to vie with the invaders of their country in criminality. Mr. Robinson was a warm admirer of the American constition, and of its illustrious head—General Washington. The pleasure he experienced in the visit of some statesmen from that land of civil and religious freedom, he expresses in one of his letters.* His talents and worth were so well known, that very handsome proposals were made to him to settle in the United States: but his attachment to his native country, was similar to that of our admired poet *Cowper:*—

"England, with all thy faults, I love thee still!"

Mr. Robinson's LITERARY ATTAINMENTS, more especially if we consider the disadvantages under which he laboured in his early years, were considerable, and afford an extraordinary instance of talent and industry. He was well acquainted with the classical, and the French languages: his knowledge of the Hebrew language was comparatively superficial. Previous to his undertaking

* Vol. IV. p. 234.

the *History of Baptism*, he thought it necessary, for the sake of consulting different original authors, to study the Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Dutch languages. He had an extensive acquaintance with history in all its branches. His knowledge of theology, morals, and politics, is displayed in his various writings. The two hymns which he composed in early life, and which have been since published in almost every collection, shew that he was not destitute of the genius and fire of poetry.* His industry was almost incredible: exclusive of his constant labours, the letters he received and wrote were numberless. With all his talents and acquirements he abhorred pedantry. Coxcombs in black he delighted to ridicule. When persons who were in no wise remarkable for their knowledge or industry, and whose whole time was employed in visiting, gossipping, and preaching two or three sermons a week, would talk of the *laborious work of the ministry*, and make wonderful pretences to application, he would reply with a look of gravity, and an archness so peculiar to himself:—"God help me, and my "children, we have not so much time to study as "you gentlemen of literature!" He would at other times address such men in the most flattering terms, and when they appeared proud of his encomiums, "would attack them with all the "poignancy of raillery. Indeed so much did he

* Vol. IV. p. 346.

"excel in this art of varying his address, that "you might suppose yourself conversing at diffe- "rent times with Chesterfield, La Bruyere, Theo- "phrastus, and Rabelais. This he would say, "is the proper way of teaching a young fellow the "knowledge of himself."* No man at the same time could more readily listen to the advice of men of sense and piety. Although well entitled to academical honours, he declined accepting the diploma of doctor of divinity offered him on his visit to Edinburgh, where he was received with the utmost civility by the celebrated Dr. Robertson and others of the Scots literati. The reason he afterwards assigned for his refusal was—"So "many egregious dunces had been made D. D's. "at English, as well as at Scotch, and American "universities, that he declined the compliment."†

Very few persons have so thoroughly studied the PRINCIPLES OF NONCONFORMITY as Mr. Robinson. They appeared to him of such importance as to constitute the foundation of whatever is excellent in the christian character. Civil establishments of religion, whether popish or protestant, episcopalian or presbyterian, he considered as partaking in a greater or lesser degree, of the essence and spirit of antichrist. He was frequently reviled for the severity of his censures on the constitution of the church of England; but let any serious, thinking, christian, contemplate the man-

* Dyer's Memoirs. p. 197—8. † Ibid. 199.

ner in which every one of her ministers enters the church, or takes his degrees, and without considering her numerous other corruptions, he will scarcely think any censure too severe. It is, I am persuaded, impossible for any clergyman who closely examines the subject, to give as he is required, before God, *ex animo*, his *unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the articles, and the book of common prayer.* All the pleas made use of, for subscribing in different and opposite senses, and as is frequently the case, in no sense at all, are so many outrages, not only on common christianity, but on common sense and common honesty; and were a person to take an oath in a court of justice, with these reservations, and equivocations, he would be indicted for perjury!* A sincere christian in contemplating this awful subject; in beholding a church in

* These remarks will apply equally to college oaths, as to church subscriptions. During my residence at Cambridge, a gentleman, (son of a late excellent statesman in the sister kingdom,) a member of the university, who honoured me with his friendship, was about to take his degree of B. A. Examining the oath administered, he found he could not conscientiously comply with its requisitions; on which he presented a petition to the *Caput*, stating his difficulty, and offering to prove that *the oath could not be taken without perjury;* praying therefore that this snare for conscience might be removed. The vice-chancellor laid the petition before the *Caput*, but it was shortly after returned with the answer—*Nothing could be done.* Although the abilities and acquirements of the petitioner fully entitled him to his degree, and he possessed the best of

one of her most solemn services, wholly given to prevarication, ought not to be blamed if his feelings are somewhat similar to those of the great apostle, when at that seat of learning and science, *Athens.—His spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.** Whilst Mr. Robinson thus reprobated the ecclesiastical establishment, he was by no means insensible to the general worth of many of her members. For several of the clergy, and of the dignitaries of the national church, he entertained a great respect, who in return, being well persuaded of the excellence of his character, and the purity of his motives, maintained with him an uninterrupted intercourse, and ranked him amongst their friends. The learned Dr. Ogden once addressed him—"Do "the dissenters know the worth of the man?" Mr. Robinson replied—"The man knows the worth "of the dissenters." His attachment to the dissenting interest in general, and to that of his own church and congregation in particular, continued firm and unvaried to the close of his life.

Intolerance in all its forms was the peculiar object of his detestation. "Always when I met it,

moral characters, he was obliged to leave the university without receiving academical honours: but he preserved what will afford him infinitely greater satisfaction through life, and at the hour of death—*A good conscience.*

* Acts. xvii.

" in a course of reading," he observes, " I thought " I met the GREAT DEVIL; and my resentment " was never abated by his appearing in the habit " of a holy man of God."* RELIGIOUS LIBERTY was to him almost an object of adoration: he refused to accept the pastoral office at Cambridge, till the congregation had agreed to throw down the wall of partition, which till then had divided them from their independent brethren. Good men of all denominations were welcome to his house, his heart, and his pulpit.†

* Vol. I. p. 292.

† It is remarkable that the sphere of Mr. Robinson's ministry was the same in which his great grandfather, Mr. Shelly of Jesus College, and Vicar of All Saints, had with others diffused the principles of the puritans early in the 17th. century. Mr. Robinson in a letter terms Mr. Shelly " an old fa- " shioned good man," and inserts the following curious rhymes, which the old gentleman made on a " sudden as he was going to " preach in his parish church, in answer to one of his parishioners, " who asked,—How long sir, have you and Mrs. Shelly been " married?" The excellent lesson inculcated, must be my apology for laying them before the reader.

" Fifty years and three,
" Together in love, liv'd we:
" Angry both at once none ever did us see.
" This was the fashion
" God taught us, and not fear,
" When one was in a passion
" The other could forbear."

In a former part of these Memoirs, I have stated that Mr. Robinson " gave lectures on the principles of Nonconformity " in the vestry of his meeting house;" but I have since been informed by a friend who attended them, that they were delivered at his own house at Chesterton.

As a PREACHER, Mr. Robinson ranks in the highest class, and we may safely claim for him the very summit of his own denomination. His merits in this respect are well described by Dr. Toulmin.—"His preaching was altogether without notes; a method in which he was peculiarly happy; not by trusting to his memory entirely, nor by working himself to a degree of warmth and passion, to which the preachers among whom he first appeared commonly owe their ready utterance, but by thoroughly studying, and making himself perfectly master of his subject, and a certain faculty of expression which is never at a loss for suitable and proper words. His manner was admirably adapted to enlighten the understanding, and to affect and reform the heart. He had such a plainness of speech, such an easy and apparent method in dividing a discourse, and such a familiar way of reasoning, as discovered an heart filled with the tenderest concern for the meannest of his hearers, and yet there was a decency, propriety, and justness that the most judicious could not but approve."*

* Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinson. I was on the point of ascribing the above remarks to the editors of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; when I discovered that the passage was copied by them, without being marked as a quotation, or in any way acknowledged. Whether the censures of these critics are like their praises, *plagiarisms*, I must leave others to discover.

To this account we may add, that his mode of delivery was singularly impressive. His voice soft, yet harmonious; his looks penetrating, and his action appropriate;* no man had a greater power of rivetting the attention of his hearers: he was admired by all sects and parties. I well remember hearing him at Maze Pond, during the pastorship of the late Mr. Wallin, preach an excellent sermon from Rom. iii. 24. "*Being justified freely* "*by his grace; through the redemption that is* "*in Jesus Christ.*" The principles were what are termed *moderate Calvinism:* amongst his auditors were the late Mr. Hugh Farmer, and Dr. Priestley, both of whom admired the discourse. He was in short, one of the most rational, scriptural, instructive, persuasive, and delightful preachers that ever adorned the pulpit.

The crowning excellence of this great and good man's character was—His ARDENT LOVE OF TRUTH, THE SINCERITY AND IMPARTIALITY, WITH WHICH HE SOUGHT, AND THE HONESTY WITH WHICH HE PRACTISED IT. These are the GRAND ESSENTIALS without which no man can, in the sight of God, be a christian, and possessing which, no one has a right to say—He is *not* a christian. This noble disposition impelled him, as we have seen, at various periods of his

* The portrait engraved from an original picture in the possession of the author's son-in-law, Mr. S. Brown, for this work, is a very striking likeness.

life to sacrifice his worldly interests to what he considered the cause of truth: the same disposition enabled him to avoid that rock, popular applause, on which such numbers have split, who *loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* With a mind constantly open to conviction, can it excite surprise, if, as he advanced in life, he saw reason to alter some of his sentiments on doctrinal points: what they were towards the close of his life, has been the subject of much speculation, and much misrepresentation. As the truths of the gospel do not rest on any human authority, and as I have no inclination to disguise any of the opinions held by our author, I shall endeavour, with impartiality, to lay before the reader all I have been able to collect on the subject.

If some of the statements of his former biographer, Mr. Dyer, were well founded; if while Mr. Robinson was with earnestness pleading the cause of christianity, and representing its truths of the utmost importance to the interests of his fellow creatures, he was at the same time "the mere pu-"pil of nature, and scarcely to be considered a "believer:"* if, while defending what he termed divine truth, "his aim was rather to display his "agility than to secure a triumph;" writing his Memoirs would for me, have been a task too painful. Whilst perusing his works and calling to mind his sermons, I should have sighed in secret

* Memoirs, p. 269.

at the recollection of his apostacy: but these aspersions on his character I have already proved are as unfounded as they are cruel.

Mr. Dyer commences his last attack on Mr. Robinson's sincerity, by observing: "In regard to "the importance in which he considered Baptism "—even there, *some may entertain a degree of* "*hesitation.* When he wrote his two admirable "histories, he was unquestionably a sincere bap- "tist, but when it is recollected that the whole "was written nearly a year before his decease, a "person who *doubts* whether he supposed baptism "so important, as he did originally, should not "be charged with illiberality." This "degree of "hesitation and doubt," concerning Mr. Robinson's sentiments on the importance of baptism did not long satisfy Mr. Dyer, for he presently adds—"for a considerable time before his death, "he shewed *not only an indifference*, but *a de-* "*gree of manifest reluctance* towards the practice "of this ceremony: he evidently seemed to con- "sider it as a burden rather than a delight."* An alteration of opinion on the subject of baptism may not be in all cases a matter of great importance, but in the present instance such a charge materially affects Mr. Robinson's character. In his *History of Baptism*, he seriously argues for the truth, the importance and perpetuity of the ordinance: this work was in the press and nearly

* Memoirs. p. 416.

ready for publication at the time of his death: what opinion must the world then form of his integrity if he could thus write and publish what he himself did not believe? But what is the evidence brought forward to support this "degree of "hesitation, and doubt;" this assertion that Mr. Robinson discovered "a degree of manifest re- "luctance to perform the ordinance of baptism?" The whole is contained in an extract of a letter to a female friend, (Miss Hayes) in which we are informed "there occurs *some such* singular ex- "clamation as the following:—I became a bap- "tist on principle, and now I am ashamed of my "party." If Mr. Dyer had inquired of his female friend, to whom this letter was addressed, she would have informed him, that the only letter written to her by Mr. Robinson on the subject of baptism, "was one in which he mentioned the "baptism of his own children," the administration of which gave him peculiar pleasure; and that she "never heard of his having changed his "opinions on the subject." If he had further inquired of Mr. Robinson's family, and of the leading members of his church they would have informed him, that "so far from having any objec- "tion to engage in the service, he chearfully per- "formed what he *always* thought a duty." But it is surprising that Mr. Dyer should pervert the "*some* "*such* singular expression" from its evident meaning, when he himself had just before quoted a similar expression from another of Mr. Robinson's

letters: "I have been seven weeks in London: "*my own party* treated me with neglect &c." I will not however presume to charge Mr. Dyer in the pesent instance with "illiberality," but he is certainly chargeable with something worse—INJUSTICE. Every body, but himself, must perceive that the imperfect quotation he has produced has nothing to do with Mr. Robinson's sentiments on baptism, and that it solely refers to the ill treatment he had received from his brethren.

But, so attached was Mr. Dyer to his system of "pure simple nature,"* and so bent on persuading his readers that Mr. Robinson was a votary of the same system, "the pupil of nature, and scarce-"ly to be considered a believer," that he almost challenges the friends of christianity who may yet have the courage to defend the validity of our author's claim to the title of Christian! "Reader," he adds, "speaking of Robert Robinson, say not "of him he believed this tenet, or disbelieved the "other, for *perhaps there may exist persons who* "*may think themselves qualified to contradict* "*thee:* say rather of him, he was an amiable, a "benevolent, a generous, a learned man, a true "philanthropist, an invariable friend to liberty."† In plain language, reader, according to Mr. Dyer, you may say of him that he was any thing but a *Christian!*

If it were worth while I should most chearfully accept Mr. Dyer's challenge, and I *could* refer

* Memoirs. p. 283. † Ibid. p. 418.

him to a gentleman with whom he is well acquainted, whose mind is somewhat of the colour of his own, unhappily tinctured with scepticism, but who when conversing with me on this subject, remarked—"How unjustly the biographer of Mr. Ro-"binson had treated his character";—"For" added he, "Mr. Robinson to the close of his life would with "earnestness endeavour to convince me of the "truth and importance of christianity." But it is unnecessary to spend a moment in refuting loose, unsupported assertions and insinuations, that are as opposite to truth as darkness is to light. At the same time, justice to Mr. Dyer requires me to add, that I am persuaded he did not entertain the most distant idea of doing what he thought an injury to the character of Mr. Robinson, although it is certain that the reflections, on which painful duty has compelled me to animadvert, are calculated to afford a triumph to his most bitter and implacable enemies.

The Northern critics to whom I have before alluded, speaking of Mr. Robinson observe—"In "*our* opinion he acquires but little credit from "the *frequency* with which he changed his reli-"gious *creed: we have reason to believe he died a* "*Socinian.*"* We forgive these anonymous time-serving writers for giving so little credit to Mr. Robinson for the impartiality and disinterestedness which accompanied his inquiries; their souls

* Encyc. Brit.

and his being of a very different order. To talk of his *creeds*, and the *frequency* of his changing them only serves to discover their own ignorance. Their opinion, in itself considered is of little consequence, but the assertion "that he died a *So-* "*cinian*," having been read, by half a million of people, the majority of whom have, probably, been taught to consider the terms *Socinian* and *Infidel* synonimous, deserves some notice. Justice required these writers to produce evidence for the truth of their assertion; but as they have not, I must beg leave to state, that I have "reason to "believe" that he did NOT die a *Socinian*. What follows may enable the reader to judge which of the above opposite opinions is most deserving of credit.

In Mr. Robinson's *Ecclesiastical Researches*, he has in the History of the church of Poland, given an account, equally distinguished for its justice and candour, of the peculiarities of *Socinianism:* he has likewise assigned the true reasons why the system can never be generally received by those persons to whom the gospel is more particularly addressed,—not to a few learned men of a speculative turn of mind, but to people of plain sense, and honest hearts, and who although destitute of critical knowledge, *receive the word gladly*. Mr. Dyer expresses his dissatisfaction with Mr. Robinson's account.* I have neither leisure nor

* Memoirs. p. 394.

inclination to contest the point. I merely state the fact, from which this conclusion must be drawn;—That the author when he wrote this account, which from a letter to his old friend Mr. Turner of Abingdon,* appears to have been about four years before his death, was *not* a *Socinian.* It is not pretended that he afterwards made any alteration in this part of his history, but that he left it at the time of his death, in the state in which the editor has faithfully published it: we have therefore the presumptive evidence, that no change took place in his sentiments on this article.

But let us attend to later and more direct evidence. In a letter written by Mr. Robinson to his friend, Mr. Lucas of Shrewsbury, dated Sep. 16. 1789, in which he appears to have unbosomed himself, he writes as follows:—

"*Believe me I am neither a* SOCINIAN, *nor an* "*Arian.* I do not know among what class of *he-*"*retics* to place myself: sometimes I think I am "a *Paulianist* or *Samosatanian,* for I think Je-"sus a man in whom *the fulness of the Godhead* "*dwells,* and I give him more dignity than they "do, who ascribe to him only a third part of "Deity. Years ago reverence for great names "misled me. I said after *Clarke,* there was a "Scripture Trinity, and I would say so still if I "could tell what I meant; but as I cannot, I cast "that phrase also to the bats and moles. There is,

* Vol. IV. p. 233.

" there can be only one first cause. Jesus is his
" Son, his representative, and if you please, your
" God, the vicegerent of the Supreme, whom you
" honour by honouring him. I do not think God
" ever proposed the question of the nature of Jesus
" to us to determine; it is a child of the schools,
" born in litigation, and subsisting by it to this
" day, to the utter ruin of genuine piety and chris-
" tian benevolence. Pray, says one·····Do
" you believe the Atonement? Not your gross
" description of it; yet I cannot think all the pas-
" sages that speak of the death of Christ are to be
" taken figuratively. In brief, I believe the scrip-
" tures, the record that God hath given of his Son,
" but as for the rash questions, which the schools
" in their great wisdom have started, be so good as
" to settle them among yourselves, and allow one
" disciple of Christ, to sit at his feet, and be con-
" tent with hearing his word, and no more. Dis-
" putants have wanted me to take a side, and be-
" cause I refuse to do so, they represent me as a
" man void of all principle, to whom truth and
" error are alike indifferent. What I say of *scho-*
" *lastic theology, that* they apply to the *gospel of*
" *our Lord*, as if a man who held their brangles
" indifferent, held the sacred truths of revelation
" so·····I adore God for so loving the world,
" as to send his Son. I embrace him as an un-
" speakable gift. I believe his doctrines, trust his
" promises, copy his life, imbibe his disposition,
" and live in hope of the glory he has promised

" all his disciples. I HAVE NO DOUBTS, and I " want none of the reputation that this host of " men lavish upon one another."*

I trust the reader will excuse me for making so long an extract from a letter which they may so easily refer to; but it is of considerable importance, and deserves particular notice in these Memoirs, as it was written within nine months of the author's death, and contains the latest declaration of his sentiments on the points in controversy, which I have, after many inquiries, been able to procure.

The opinions expressed by Mr. Robinson in this letter appear to be nearly, if not entirely the same as those expressed in his *Village Discourses.* Amongst many passages which might be produced, one may suffice for the present occasion.

" The Scripture gives us no more information " concerning the nature of Christ, than it doth " concerning the nature of other beings men- " tioned by incident, nor was it necessary; for " truth of fact according to appearance, and not " description of properties, which perhaps we could " not comprehend, is the only important article " to us in the present state. Three men inqui- " ring the nature of Jesus Christ agreed to be set " down by the Apostle John. The first took his " gospel and read, *the word that was made flesh* " *was God,* that is, said he, by office. The se-

* See the letter at length, Vol. IV. p. 287—291.

" cond took the book and read—*the word that* " *was made flesh was God*, that is, said he, by " nature. The third took the book, read the " same words, and said I do not know what the " nature of God is, so that I fear to say Jesus " Christ is God by nature: I do not know fully " what the nature of God is not, and therefore I " dare not say that Jesus Christ is so God by of- " fice that he cannot be God by nature. In this " difficulty I apply to the inspired apostle, and he " says nothing. I respect his silence, perhaps he " knew no more: perhaps God who inspired him " ordered him to add no more. Like him there- " fore, I will call Jesus Christ what he calls him, " pay him all the homage he pays him, and be si- " lent on a subject, which I do not fully under- " stand."*

The evidence I have thus produced is conclusive; and till any person can produce counter

* Village Discourses, p. 246. Ed. 1805. By this discourse, and more particularly by another in the same volume, entitled *The death of Jesus Christ obtained the remission of sins*, it appears that the sentiments of the author on the doctrine of the *Atonement*, were the same as those he afterwards expressed in his letter to Mr. Lucas.

On this important doctrine of the gospel, the remark of a modern writer, who, although he would fain be thought the champion of *orthodoxy*, is by many of his brethren strongly suspected of *heresy*, is not unworthy of notice. " If we say a " way was opened by the death of Christ for the free and con- " sistent exercise of mercy, in all the methods which sove- " reign wisdom saw fit to adopt, perhaps we shall include EVE-

evidence and of a later date, I may safely affirm —Mr. Robinson never embraced *Socinianism.*

Respecting the doctrine of the *Divinity of Christ,* it is equally clear that some change took place in the opinions he had defended in his popular work on that subject. One of his friends, Timothy Brown, Esq. of London, informed me,— "That Mr. Robinson in a conversation with him "as they were walking together in the fields, ac- "knowledged that this change was occasioned by "a serious perusal of Mr. Lindsey's *Examination* "of the above performance:" but to what extent the change took place, it is impossible with any degree of precision to determine. The doctrine of three co-equal, distinct *persons* in the *Godhead,* he had for many years discarded, long before he wrote his *Plea,* and during the height of his popularity. The *Athanasian* creed, that mass of unintelligible jargon, and profaneness united, in which is pronounced the sentence of eternal damnation on every one who does not "keep it "whole and undefiled," he justly abominated, and thought the man who really believed it, prepared to receive any absurdity: indeed it may be questioned, whether it is possible for a man seriously

"RY MATERIAL IDEA WHICH THE SCRIPTURES GIVE US "OF THAT IMPORTANT EVENT."—*The Gospel its own witness. By A. Fuller. p.* 261.

This appears to be an accurate statement of Mr. Robinson's opinion. Mr. Fuller, therefore, and all those who think with him, must allow our author to have been, on this point, quite *sound!*

to " believe it faithfully". In conversing with the clergy of the established church, and the *evangelical* clergy amongst the rest, on this subject, I never found one who did not confess, that he could not pronounce the sentence of eternal damnation on such men as Archbishop Tillotson, Bishop Burnet, Doctors Watts and Doddridge, not one of whom was a believer in the creed; yet, awful to reflect, every clergyman hurls this damnatory sentence, in the solemn offices of devotion, whenever he reads the creed, to *all* and *every part* of which he has given his *unfeigned assent* and *consent!*

By the last document of Mr. Robinson's sentiments on this subject it appears, that they were nearly the same with those of *Paul* of *Samosata*, bishop of the church at Antioch, in the third century. Ecclesiastical historians do not perfectly agree in their representation of his sentiments. Mr. Robinson's account is the fairest that can be given on this occasion, as it shews the sense in which he understood them; and is consequently the best explanation of his own.—" Paul thought " Jesus a man, inhabited as it were by the Deity, " and therefore to be called God, as a mansion is " named from the family resident in it.—He did " not offer prayer to Jesus, but to God through " him.····The opinion of Paul in the third cen- " tury, was evidently that held by Artemas in the " second."

Mr. Robinson's sentiments on some other points were not dissimilar from the bishop's, and the treatment they experienced, was equally remarkable. "Paul," adds our historian, "seems to have "paid very little regard to the clerical character, "for he dressed and acted like other citizens, ap- "peared in public places, and exercised the "friendly office of arbitrator in his own church, "and that of a public magistrate in the city. En- "vy and orthodoxy united to suppress this man: "the neighbouring teachers pretended he taught "heresy, and they assembled at Antioch to de- "liberate on the subject. It was not easy to con- "vict him of heresy, for he had a genius lofty, "and far superior to their vulgar prejudices; they "were word-mongers, he was a man of SOUL!"*

After all the unjust odium which has been cast on Mr. Robinson for his supposed heterodoxy, the change of his sentiments does not appear to have been greater that that of a man, who, considering his talents, his virtues, the variegated excellencies of his character, may, perhaps, be pronounced the principal ornament of the dissenters—Doctor ISAAC WATTS. It is an indisputable fact, that this pre-eminently great and good man in the latter part of his life rejected the commonly received notions on the Trinity. His latest opinions on the subject appear to have been:—"That the Fa-

* Ecclesiastical Researches. p. 62.

" ther in the strictest sense is the only true God; " that Jesus Christ his son, consists of a human " body and a pre-existent soul; that in this per- " son, thus constituted, the Deity permanently " resides; and that the Holy Spirit, is not as has " been generally described, a proper person, but " the influence, energy, or power of God."* It is not yet, however, become the fashion to damn Doctor Watts for a heretic, except amongst the Athanasian creed-mongers: on the contrary, his biographers, the late Doctor Gibbons of London, Doctor Williams of Rotheram, and Mr. Parsons of Leeds, men most justly esteemed by the religious world in general, and by their own denomination, the *Calvinistic independents*, in particular, do not seem, in their respective accounts of Doctor Watts, to have thought that his *heresies* had cast even a shade on his character; indeed they have not thought them worth mentioning. The account they have given of some of the doctor's conversations in his last illness I beg leave to transcribe, for the encouragement of those plain

* A Faithful Enquiry after the ancient and original doctrine of the Trinity, &c. By Dr. Watts.

Mr. Robinson's successor, Mr. Hall, whose talents as a preacher, as to the matter of his discourses, were only inferior to those of his predecessor, it may be remarked, was *not* a Trinitarian, as he did not believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit; and yet he never met with such unworthy treatment, as his predecessor, but was always welcome to the most orthodox pulpits.

christians, who like myself may have read a little of controversy on the subject alluded to; who are almost weary of it; but who feel happy in the reflection, that their salvation does not depend on the belief of any *human* creed. "When the doc-" tor," his recent biographers inform us, "was " almost worn out by his infirmities, he observed " in conversation with a friend, that he remem-" bered an aged minister used to say, that the " most learned and knowing christians, when they " came to die, have only the same plain promises " of the gospel for their support, as the common " and unlearned, and so said he, I find it. It is " the plain promises of the gospel that are my " support, and I bless God they are plain pro-" mises, that do not require much labour and " pains to understand them; for I can do nothing " now but look into my bible, for some promise " to support me, and live upon that."

Having before appealed to the testimony of a man of some popularity in Mr. Robinson's denomination, (Mr. Andrew Fuller) for the soundness of his faith on one point, I now appeal to much more respectable authorities in the independent denomination, the living biographers of Doctor Watts. They will doubtless agree with me in placing Mr. Robinson, with respect to the soundness of his faith, in the same class with the doctor; and acknowledge, that the alteration in some of the opinions of each towards the close of life, by no

means tarnished the distinguished lustre of their characters.

One of the most intimate friends of Mr. Robinson, Mr. Thomas Dunscombe now of Broughton, Hants, in answer to a letter addressed to him on the subject of his friend's sentiments towards the close of his life, expresses himself as follows:—

"You inquire what I think of Mr. Robinson's "sentiments towards the close of his life. In an- "swer, I think it highly probable that his views "were in some instances peculiarly his own; he "started amongst the *orthodox*, but reading and "reflection convinced him of the defectiveness, "inutility, and dangerous tendency of a doctri- "nal strain of preaching; his general mode of "preaching was calculated not only to secure "universal attention, but to fascinate the most in- "telligent and to benefit all classes; but his si- "lence, or moderation, his scriptural phraseology "on points of orthodox doctrine, raised an out- "cry against him, which nearly occasioned his "exile from the pulpits, and friendship, and even "the good opinion of those who had held him in "the warmest admiration, and professed for him "the sincerest friendship. The enmity displayed "by those who were once his friends, gave him, "I know, exquisite pain, and drove him as it "were for shelter into the embraces of those who "were deemed heterodox. The *Socinians*, and "*Unitarians* courted him, and gloried in consi- "dering him one of themselves: but he was not

" of any sect. I believe he was nearer the truth " as it is in the gospel, than the professed disciples " of any existing name or party in the christian " church. When I spent a few days with him at " Chesterton, *a month before his death*, he would " in our conversations lament with tears in his " eyes, the state of the christian church, and the " differences among christians: the longer I live, " he would say, the more I am convinced there " are difficulties in every system, which cannot " be explained."

The ill treatment which Mr. Robinson experienced from his own denomination did not discourage him from labouring elsewhere. In a letter to Mr. Turner of Abingdon, he observes—" I " preached for the general baptists, and for Doc- " tors Rees, Kippis, Price, Mr. Worthington, &c. " so that now the slandering orthodox name me " an Arian, or a Socinian with an apparent grace." This indeed was his duty. When a man of abilities and piety is persecuted by one sect, let him try and do all the good he can in another, and not hide his talent in a napkin. Whether the readiness with which he was received, and the friendship shewn to him by great men of different sentiments from those with whom he had during the greater part of his life been the most intimate, might have any effect in confirming any alteration in his sentiments, it is impossible to determine. A man of Mr. Robinson's talents, placed in his circumstances, had need to have a peculiar gaurd

over himself, that he may not be influenced, in his religious inquiries, by either "evil report, or "good report;" but that the love of truth may in his mind be always paramount to every other consideration.

In the letter to Mr. Turner, last quoted, Mr. Robinson adds—"I am set free from party, and "now I wish nothing more than to drop every "name but that of christian."——I here cannot help exclaiming—Would to God that sincere christians were universally inspired with the same wish! this indeed, has been professed in words:—

> "Let names and sects, and parties fall,
> "And JESUS CHRIST be all in all!"

When will that large party of christians who are in the habit of singing these lines, more deeply imbibe their spirit, and more practically regard the excellent sentiment therein inculcated.

The disciples were called christians first at Antioch. Happy would it have been for the church had they never been called by any other name. When I consider the unhappy effects produced in past ages, and the unhappy effects which are still so conspicuous; when in particular, I reflect on the treatment which that excellent man experienced whose life and writings we have been reviewing, I cannot but confess that had I the right and the authority to draw up an *index expurgatorius*, I should be inclined to banish from the christian church, or at least to confine to the studies of the learned and the speculative, the

names—*Calvinist and Arminian, Arian and Socinian, Trinitarian and Unitarian;** the terms *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy*, together with many

* "About the year 150, Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, "first made use of the word *Trinity*, to express what divines "call *Persons* in the Godhead, on which, first Mosheim, and "after him, Dr. King makes this just reflection. *The chris-* "*tian church is very little obliged to him for his invention. The* "*use of this and other unscriptural terms, to which men attach* "*either no ideas, or false ones, has destroyed charity and peace* "*without promoting truth or knowledge. It has produced* "*heresies of the worst kind.*" Ecclesiastical Researches. p. 52.

"MARTIN LUTHER says—The word *Trinity* sounds odd- "ly, and is a human invention; it were better to call Al- "mighty God, *God*, than *Trinity*. JOHN CALVIN says, I "like not this prayer—O! holy, blessed and glorious *Trinity;* "it savours of barbarity. . . . .The word *Trinity* is barbarous, "insipid, and profane, a *human* invention, grounded on no "testimony of God's word; the popish God, unknown to the "prophets and apostles." *See the Apology of Ben Mordecai &c. By Henry Taylor, A. M. Rector of Crawley, &c.* Vol. I. p. 140. And the late excellent *Mr. Fawcett's Candid Reflections on the different sentiments of good men respecting the Doctrine of the Trinity.*

That great man Bishop Taylor, admirably observes—"He "who goes about to speak of the mystery of the *Trinity*, and "does it by words and names of man's invention, talking of "essences and existences, hypostases and personalities, pri- "orities in co-equalities, and unity in pluralities, may amuse "himself, and build a tabernacle in his head, and talk some- "thing he knows not what; but the good man, who feels the "power of the Father, and to whom the Son is become *wis-* "*dom, sanctification*, and *redemption*, in whose heart the love "of the Spirit of God is shed abroad—*this man*, though he "understands nothing of what is unintelligible, yet he *alone* "*truly understands* the christian doctrine of the Trinity."

others, the meaning of which is seldom with any degree of precision understood by the majority of those who use them; which appear to be productive of little else than mischief, and which more peculiarly have the effect to narrow the mind, to divide christians, and to make them avoid if not hate each other.*

Whilst the christian church is, however, divided into sects and parties, it is most earnestly to be desired, that controversial writers and preachers would be cautious and candid in their language, more especially on subjects which it is impossible for any finite intellect to comprehend—The *nature of God*, the *modus of the divine existence*, the *union between the Father and the Son*, the *operations of the Holy Spirit*. Let controversialists on one side, renounce their inclination to damn those who may not receive their creeds, and explanations of scripture doctrines, and constantly bear in mind that the only *heresies* which are in the sacred writings pronounced *damnable*, are those which have the most visible effect on the tempers, conversa-

* The late Lord Sandwich, who was by no means remarkable for the purity of either his faith or his morals; in a debate in the house of Lords on ecclesiastical affairs made the following observation :—" I have heard frequent use made of " the words *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy ;* but I confess myself " at a loss to know precisely what they mean :" on which Bishop Warburton, in a low tone replied—" *Orthodoxy* my lord, is " MY *Doxy*, *Heterodoxy* is ANOTHER *man's Doxy* !"

tion, and conduct of mankind:* and may controversialists on the opposite side, be equally cautious of arrogating a superior degree of rationality or piety, and of branding their fellow christians with the odious appellation of *idolaters*, who abhor the crime of *idolatry* equally with themselves; many of whom, *not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, honour Jesus Christ*, and pay him the same worship as the primitive christians on earth, and the assembly of the redeemed, and spirits the most exalted in the scale of creation, are represented as paying him around the throne of God. Let us rather suspect the truth of a favourite hypothesis, than seek, by far-fetched and fanciful glosses, to evade the evident meaning of plain passages of sacred writ, or deny the divine authority of the writers. On the awful and sublime subjects we have mentioned, we should never, for a moment forget, that they relate to that Being, *who fills heaven and earth;* who is as essentially present in each of the universe of worlds, revolving

* See particularly 2. Pet. ii. 1—4. Tit. i. 9—16.—On the former passage, Mr. Brine although he was what is termed a *high Calvinist*, acknowledges that the phrase *denying the Lord that bought them*, has no reference to any particular christian doctrine, thus agreeing with Dr. Foster and others of his sentiments. *Brine on the certain efficacy of the death of Christ.* p. 136. On the latter passage Dr. Doddridge very justly remarks, that in the phrase—" *rebuke them sharply* (αποτομως) *with a* " *cutting severity, that they may be sound in the faith*, Paul " speaks of reproving VICE, not ERROR."

at immeasurable distances, in the infinite regions of space, as on every spot of the comparatively diminutive globe of earth on which we dwell..... *Canst thou by searching find out God; canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do, deeper than hell what canst thou know?.....Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it!*

However the christian church may be divided, sincere christians may at all times be encouraged by the reflection that their *labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* The man who impartially and fervently, with humility and prayer, seeks after divine truth; who is determined to sacrifice his dearest worldly interests to obtain and preserve it; whose life is under its habitual influence; who proves the sincerity of his profession by his amiable temper and disposition, his care to fill up the duties he owes to his God, to himself, to his family, and to society, with the dignity of a christian; the luxury of whose life is doing good to others;—the man who in short is constantly persuaded that conformity to the image of his Saviour in this world, is the indispensible requisite to the enjoyment of his presence in a future world; such a man may rest assured, that the Divine Spirit will *guide him into* all *truth*, necessary for his salvation; and that whatever may be his views of the various human explanations of controverted doctrinal points, it is impossible he should finally fall.

It is the peculiar glory of christianity that for every important purpose, it may be understood by men of the most limited capacities, and who are possessed of the fewest advantages. *The wayfaring man,* although he may in the judgment of the world be accounted *a fool, shall not err therein.* We have the absolute promise of our Saviour—*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.* It is indeed very remarkable, that one of the safest and soundest maxims of divinity, and which may be justly pronounced superior to those laid down in the most celebrated creeds, articles, catechisms, confessions of faith &c. a maxim which will be found unalterably true in all ages, climes, situations and circumstances, was uttered by a man who was held in the utmost contempt by the learned *Rabbies* of the day, *a beggar* who had been *blind from his birth:*—IF ANY MAN BE A WORSHIPPER OF GOD, AND DOETH HIS WILL, HIM HE HEARETH.* Such a man is in possession of what the author of all truth, has pronounced the GREAT FUNDAMENTAL of christianity, and of every thing excellent in the christian character,—the HONEST and GOOD HEART; and whatever treatment he may meet with from different parties—although he may be anathamatized by some, and despised by others, reason and scripture warrant me in pronouncing him "THE NOBLEST WORK OF GOD!"

Of this description was that great and good man ROBERT ROBINSON, who after passing a life

* John ix.

of eminent usefulness, and experiencing much ill treatment from those who were insensible of his worth, *rests from his labours, and his works follow him.* Although to perpetuate his memory, neither monument nor inscription appears within the walls of that church which he raised from the lowest to the most flourishing state,—his life, his labours, and his writings will form a monument of more durable materials than brass or marble, and his worth will remain inscribed on the hearts of the wise and the virtuous, from generation to generation. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.*

Dec. 30. 1807.

P.S. The reader will perceive by the date of the Preface, that these Memoirs were begun nearly a twelvemonth since. Various avocations, however, obliged me to lay them aside. I have by far exceeded the limits I originally intended: this circumstance, together with the perpetual interruptions which have unavoidably occurred, will I hope be accepted as an apology for the delay attending the publication, and for those imperfections, which *in this part of it,* are but too apparent even to the candid critic.

END OF THE MEMOIRS.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

REFORMATION IN FRANCE,

AND OF THE LIFE OF THE

Rev. JAMES SAURIN.

The Preface to the First Volume of a Translation of

SAURIN'S SERMONS.

[THE THIRD EDITION : PRINTED 1800.]

MEMOIRS, &c.

THE celebrated Mr. Saurin, was a French refugee, who, with thousands of his countrymen, took shelter in Holland from the persecutions of France. The lives, and even the sermons, of the refugees are so closely connected with the history of the reformation in France, that we presume, a short sketch of the state of religion in that kingdom till the banishment of the protestants by Lewis XIV. will not be disagreeable to some of the younger part of our readers.

Gaul, which is now called France, in the time of Jesus Christ, was a province of the Roman empire, and some of the apostles planted christianity in it. In the first centuries, while christianity continued a rational religion, it extended and supported itself without the help, and against the persecutions, of the Roman emperors. Numbers were converted from paganism, several christian societies were formed, and many eminent men, having spent their lives in preaching and writing for the advancement of the gospel, sealed their doctrine with their blood

In the fifth century, Clovis I. a pagan king of France, fell in love with Clotilda, a christian princess of the house of Burgundy, who agreed to marry him only on condition of his becoming a christian, to which he consented, 491. The king, however, delayed the performance of this condition till five years after his marriage, when, being engaged in a desperate battle, and having reason to fear the total defeat of his army, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and put up this prayer: *God of Queen Clotilda! grant me the victory, and I vow to be baptized, and thenceforth to worship no other God but thee!* He obtained the victory, and at his return, was baptized at Rheims, Dec. 25, 496. His sister, and more than three thousand of his subjects, followed his example, and christianity became the professed religion of France.

Conversion implies the cool exercise of reason; and whenever passion takes the place, and does the office of reason, conversion is nothing but a name. Baptism did not wash away the sins of Clovis; before it he was vile, after it he was infamous, practising all kinds of treachery and cruelty. The court, the army, and the common people, who were pagan when the king was pagan, and christian when he was christian, continued the same in their morals after their conversion as before. When the christian church, therefore, opened her doors, and delivered up her keys to these new converts, she gained nothing in comparison of what she lost. She increased the num-

ber, the riches, the pomp, and the power, of her family; but she resigned the exercise of reason, the sufficiency of scripture, the purity of worship, the grand simplicity of innocence, truth, and virtue, and became a creature of the state. A virgin before :—she become a prostitute now.

Such christians, in a long succession, converted christianity into something worse than paganism. They elevated the christian church into a temporal kingdom, and they degraded temporal kingdoms into fiefs of the church. They founded dominion in grace, and they explained grace to be a love of dominion. And by these means they completed that general apostacy, known by the name of *Popery*, which St. Paul had foretold, 1 *Tim.* iv. 1. and which rendered the reformation of the sixteenth century essential to the interests of all mankind.

The state of religion at that time (1515) was truly deplorable. Ecclesiastical *government*, instead of that evangelical simplicity, and fraternal freedom, which Jesus Christ and his apostles had taught, was become a spiritual domination under the form of a temporal empire. An innumerable multitude of dignities, titles, rights, honours, privileges, and pre-eminences belonging to it, and were all dependent on a sovereign priest, who, being an absolute monarch, required every thought to be in subjection to him. The chief ministers of religion were actually become temporal princes, and the high priest, being absolute sovereign of the ecclesiastical state, had his court and his council,

his ambassadors to negociate, and his armies to murder—his flock. The clergy had acquired immense wealth, and, as their chief study was either to collect and to augment their revenues, or to prevent the alienation of their estates, they had constituted numberless spiritual corporations, with powers, rights, statutes, privileges, and officers. The functions of the ministry were generally neglected, and, of consequence, gross ignorance prevailed. All ranks of men were extremely depraved in their morals, and the Pope's penitentiary had published the price of every crime, as it was rated in the tax-book of the Roman chancery. Marriages, which reason and scripture allowed, the Pope prohibited, and for money dispensed with those, which both forbad. Church benefices were sold to children, and to laymen, who then let them to under tenants, none of whom performed the duty, for which the profits were paid; but all having obtained them by simony, spent their lives in fleecing the flock to repay themselves. The power of the pontiff was so great, that he assumed, and what was more astonishing, he was suffered to exercise a supremacy over many kingdoms. When monarchs gratified his will, he put on a triple crown, ascended a throne, suffered them to call him *Holiness*, and to kiss his feet. When they disobliged him, he suspended all religious worship in their dominions; published false and abusive libels, called bulls, which operated as laws, to injure their persons; discharged their subjects from obedience; and gave their crowns to any who would usurp

them. He claimed an infallibility of knowledge, and an omnipotence of strength; and he forbad the world to examine his claim. He was addressed by titles of blasphemy; and though he owned no jurisdiction over himself, yet he affected to extend his authority over heaven and hell, as well as over a middle place called purgatory, of all which places, he said he kept the keys. This irregular church-polity was attended with quarrels, intrigues, schisms, and wars.

Religion itself was made to consist of the performance of numerous ceremonies, of pagan, jewish, and monkish extraction, all which might be performed without either faith in God, or love to mankind. The church ritual was an address, not to the reason, but to the senses of men; music stole the ear, and soothed the passions; statues, paintings, vestments, and various ornaments, beguiled the eye; while the pause, which was produced by that sudden attack, which a multitude of objects made on the senses, on entering a spacious decorated edifice, was enthusiastically taken for devotion. Blind obedience was first allowed by courtesy, and then established by law. Public worship was performed in an unknown tongue, and the sacrament was adored as the body and blood of Christ. The credit of the ceremonial produced in the people a notion, that the performance of it was the practice of piety, and religion degenerated into gross superstition. Vice, uncontrolled by reason or scripture, retained a pagan vigour, and committed the most horrid crimes; and super-

stition atoned for them, by building and endowing religious houses, and by bestowing donations on the church. Human merit was introduced, saints were invoked, and the perfections of God were distributed by canonization, among the creatures of the Pope.

The pillars, that *supported* this edifice, were immense riches, arising, by imposts, from the sins of mankind; idle distinctions between supreme and subordinate adoration; senseless axioms, called the divinity of the schools; preachments of buffoonery, or blasphemy, or both; cruel casuistry, consisting of a body of dangerous and scandalous morality; false miracles and midnight visions; spurious books and paltry relics; oaths, dungeons, inquisitions, and crusades. The whole was denominated THE HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH, and laid to the charge of Jesus Christ.

Loud complaints had been made of these excesses, for the last hundred and fifty years, to those whose business it was to reform; and, bad as they were, they had owned the necessity of reformation, and had repeatedly promised to reform. Several councils had been called for the purpose of reforming; but nothing had been done, nor could any thing be expected from assemblies of mercenary men, who were too deeply interested in darkness to vote for day. They were inflexible against every remonstrance, and, as a Jesuit has since expressed it, *they would not extinguish one taper, though it were to convert all the Hugonots in France.*

The restorers of literature reiterated and reasoned on these complaints; but they reasoned to the wind. The church champions were hard driven; they tried every art to support their cause: but as they could neither get rid of the attack by a polite duplicity, nor intimidate their sensible opponents by anathemas; as they would not determine the matter by scripture, and as they could not defend themselves by any other method; as they were too obstinate to reform themselves, and too proud to be reformed by their inferiors, the plaintiffs at length laid aside thoughts of applying to them, and, having found out *the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free*, went about reforming themselves. The reformers were neither popes, cardinals, nor bishops; but they were good men, who aimed to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind. This was the state of the church, when Francis I. ascended the throne, 1515.

Were we to enter into a minute examination of the reformation in France, we would own a particular interposition of Providence; but we would also take the liberty to observe, that a happy conjunction of jarring interests rendered the sixteenth century a fit æra for reformation. Events, that produced, protected, and persecuted reformation, proceeded from open and hidden, great and little, good and bad causes. The capacities and the tempers, the virtues and the vices, the views and the interests, the wives and the mistresses of the princes of those times; the abilities and dispositions of the officers of each crown; the powers of government, and the

persons who wrought them; the tempers and geniuses of the people; all these, and many more, were springs of action, which, in their turns, directed the great events that were exhibited to public view. But our limits allow no inquiries of this kind.

The reformation, which began in Germany, had extended itself to Geneva, and thence into France. The French had a translation of the bible, which had been made, in 1224, by Guiars des Moulins. It had been revised, corrected, and printed at Paris, 1487, by order of Charles VIII. and the study of it now began to prevail. The reigning king, who was a patron of learning, encouraged his valet de chambre, Clement Marot, to versify some of David's psalms, and took great pleasure in singing them, and either protected, or persecuted the reformation, as his interest seemed to him to require.* Although in 1535, he went in procession to burn the first martyrs of the reformed church, yet, in the same year, he sent for Melancthon to come into France to reconcile religious differences. Although he persecuted his own protestant subjects with infinite inhumanity, yet, when he was afraid that the ruin of the German protestants would strengthen

* His majesty's favourite psalm, which he sang when he went a hunting was the 42d. The queen used to sing the 6th, and the king's mistress the 130th. Marot translated fifty, Beza the other hundred, Calvin got them set to music by the best musicians, and every body sang them as ballads. When the reformed churches made them a part of their worship, the papists were forbidden to sing them any more, and to sing a psalm was a sign of a Lutheran.

the hands of the Emperor Charles V. he made an alliance with the protestant princes of Germany, and allowed the Duke of Orleans, his second son, to offer them the free exercise of their religion in the Dukedom of Luxemburg. He suffered his sister, the Queen of Navarre, to protect the reformation in her country of Bearn, and even saved Geneva, when Charles Duke of Savoy would have taken it. It was no uncommon thing, in that age, for princes to trifle thus with religion. His majesty's first concern was to be a king, his second to act like a rational creature.

The reformation greatly increased in this reign. The pious Queen of Navarre made her court a covert from every storm, supplied France with preachers, and the exiles at Geneva with money. Calvin who in 1534, had fled from his rectory in France, and had settled at Geneva in 1541, was a chief instrument; he slid his catechism and other books into France. Some of the bishops were inclined to the reformation; but secretly, for fear of the christians of Rome. The reformation was called Calvinism. The people were named Sacramentarians, Lutherans, Calvinists, and nick-named *Hugonots*, either from Hugon, a hobgoblin, because, to avoid persecution, they held their assemblies in the night; or from the gate Hugon, in Tours, where they used to meet; or from a Swiss word which signifies a league.

Henry II. who succeeded his father Francis, 1547, was a weak, and a wicked prince. The increase of his authority was *the law and the pro-*

phets to him. He violently persecuted the calvinists of France, because he was taught to believe that heresy was a faction repugnant to authority; and he made an alliance with the German protestants, and was pleased with the title of *Protector of the Germanic liberties*, that is, protector of *protestantism*. This alliance he made in order to check the power of Charles V. He was governed, sometimes by his queen, Catharine de Medicis, niece of Pope Clement VII. who, it is said, never did right, except she did it by mistake; often by the constable de Montmorenci, whom, contrary to the express command of his father, in his dying illness, he had placed at the head of administration; chiefly by his mistress, Diana of Poitiers, who had been mistress to his father, and who bore an implacable hatred to the protestants; and always by some of his favourites, whom he suffered to amass immense fortunes by accusing men of heresy. The reformation was very much advanced in this reign. The gentry promoted the acting of plays, in which the comedians exposed the lives and doctrines of the popish clergy, and the poignant wit and humour of the comedians afforded infinite diversion to the people, and conciliated them to the new preachers. Beza, who had fled to Geneva, 1548, came backward and forward into France, and was a chief promoter of the work. His Latin testament, which he first published in this reign, 1556, was much read, greatly admired, and contributed to the strength of the cause. The new testament was the

Goliah's sword of the clerical reformers: *there was none like it.*

Francis II. succeeded his father Henry, 1559. He was only in the sixteenth year of his age, extremely weak both in body and mind, and therefore incapable of governing the kingdom by himself. In this reign began those civil wars, which raged in France for almost forty years. They have been charged on false zeal for religion: but this charge is a calumny, for the crown of France was the prize for which the generals fought. It was that which inspired them with hopes and fears, productive of devotions, or persecutions, as either of them opened access to the throne. The interests of religion, indeed, fell in with these views, and so the parties were blended together in war.

The family of Charles the great, which had reigned in France for 236 years, either became extinct, or was deprived of its inheritance, at the death of Lewis the lazy in 987. Him Hugh Capet had succeeded, and had transmitted the crown to his own posterity, which, in this reign subsisted in two principal branches, in that of Valois, which was in possession of the throne, and that of Bourbon, the next heir to the throne of France, and then in possession of Bearn. The latter had been driven out of the kingdom of Navarre: but they retained the title, and were sometimes at Bearn, and sometimes at the court of France. The house of Guise, Dukes of Lorrain, a very rich and powerful family, to whose niece, Mary Queen of Scots, the young king was married, pretended to make

out their descent from Charles the great, and were competitors, when the times served, with the reigning family for the throne, and, at other times, with the Bourbon family, for the apparent heirship to it. With these views they directed their family alliances, perfected themselves in military skill, and intrigued at court for the administration of affairs. These three houses formed three parties. The house of Guise, (the chiefs of which were five brethren at this time) headed one; the king of Navarre, the princes of the blood, and the great officers of the crown, the other; the Queen-mother, who managed the interests of the reigning family, exercised her policy on both, to keep either from becoming too strong; while the feeble child on the throne was alternately a prey to them all.

Protestantism had obtained numerous converts, in the last reign. Several princes of the blood, some chief officers of the crown, and many principal families, had embraced it, and its partizans were so numerous, both in Paris and in all the provinces, that each leader of the court parties deliberated on the policy of strengthening his party by openly espousing the reformation, by endeavouring to free the protestants from penal laws, and by obtaining a free toleration for them. At length, the house of Bourbon declared for protestantism, and, of consequence, the Guises were inspired with zeal for the support of the ancient religion, and took the roman catholics under their protection. The king of Navarre, and the prince of Conde, were the heads of the first: but the

Duke of Guise had the address to obtain the chief management of affairs, and the protestants were persecuted with insatiable fury all the time of this reign.

Had religion then no share in these commotions? Certainly it had, with many of the princes, and with multitudes of the soldiers: but they were a motley mixture; one fought for his coronet, another for his land, a third for liberty of conscience, and a fourth for pay. Courage was a joint stock, and they were mutual sharers of gain or loss, praise or blame. It was religion to secure the lives and properties of noble families, and though the common people had no lordships, yet they had the more valuable rights of conscience, and for them they fought. We mistake, if we imagine that the French have never understood the nature of civil and religious liberty; they have well understood it, though they have not been able to obtain it. *Suum cuique* would have been as expressive a motto as any that the protestant generals could have borne.

The persecution of the protestants was very severe at this time. Counsellor Du Bourg, a gentleman of eminent quality, and great merit, was burnt for heresy, and the court was inclined, not only to rid France of protestantism, but Scotland also, and sent La Brosse with three thousand men to assist the Queen of Scotland in that pious design. This was frustrated by the intervention of Queen Elizabeth of England. The persecution becoming every day more intolerable, and the King being quite inaccessible to the remonstrances

of his people, the protestants held several consultations, and took the opinions of their ministers, as well as those of their noble partizans, on the question, whether it were lawful to take up arms in their own defence, and to make way for a free access to the king to present their petitions? It was unanimously resolved, that it was lawful, and it was agreed, that a certain number of men should be chosen, who should go on a fixed day, under the direction of Lewis Prince of Conde, present their petition to the King, and seize the Duke of Guise, and the Cardinal of Lorrain, his brother, in order to have them tried before the states. This affair was discovered to the Duke by a false brother, the design was defeated and twelve hundred were beheaded. Guise pretended to have suppressed a rebellion, that was designed to end in the dethroning of the king, and, by this manœuvre, he procured the general lieutenancy of the kingdom, and the glorious title of *Conservator of his country.* He pleased the puerile king by placing a few gaudy horse-guards round his palace, and he infatuated the poor child to think himself and his kingdom rich and happy, while his protestant subjects lay bleeding through all his realm.

The infinite value of an able statesman, in such an important crisis as this, might here be exemplified in the conduct of Michael de L'Hospital, who at this time, 1560, was promoted to the chancellorship: but our limits will not allow an enlargement. He was the most consummate politician that France ever employed. He had the wisdom of governing

without the folly of discovering it, and all his actions were guided by that cool moderation, which always accompanies a superior knowledge of mankind. He was a concealed protestant of the most liberal sentiments, an entire friend to religious liberty, and it was his wise management that saved France. It was his fixed opinion, that FREE TOLERATION was sound policy. We must not wonder that rigid papists deemed him an atheist, while zealous, but mistaken protestants pictured him carrying a torch behind him, to guide others, but not himself. The more a man resembles God, the more will his conduct be censured by ignorance, partiality, and pride!

The Duke of Guise, in order to please and strengthen his party, endeavoured to establish an inquisition in France. The chancellor, being willing to parry a thrust, which he could not entirely avoid, was forced, to agree to a severer edict than he could have wished to defeat the design.* By this edict, the cognizance of the crime of heresy was taken from the secular judges, and given to the bishops alone. The calvinists complained of this, because it put them into the hands of their enemies; and although their Lordships condemned and burnt so many hereticks, that their courts were justly called, *chambres ardentes,*† yet the zealous catholics thought them less eligible than an inquisition, after the manner of Spain.

* May 1560. † Burning courts, fire offices.

Soon after the making of this edict, many families having been ruined by it, Admiral Coligny, presented a petition to the king, in the names of all the protestants in France, humbly praying that they might be allowed the free exercise of their religion. The king referred the matter to the parliament, who were to consult about it with the lords of his council. A warm debate ensued, and the catholics carried it against the protestants by three voices. It was resolved, that people should be obliged, either to conform to the old established church, or to quit the kingdom, with permission to sell their estates. The protestants argued, that in a point of such importance, it would be unreasonable, on account of three voices, to inflame all France with animosity and war: that the method of banishment was impossible to be executed: and that the obliging of those, who continued in France, to submit to the Romish religion, against their consciences, was an absurd attempt, and equal to an impossibility. The chancellor, and the protestant lords, used every effort to procure a toleration, while the catholic party urged the necessity of uniformity in religion. At length two of the bishops owned the necessity of reforming, pleaded strenuously for moderate measures, and proposed the deciding of these controversies in an assembly of the states, assisted by a national council, to be summoned at the latter end of the year. To this proposal the assembly agreed.

The court of Rome, having laid it down, as an indubitable maxim in church police, that an in-

quisition was the only support of the heirarchy, and dreading the consequences of allowing a nation to reform itself, was alarmed at this intelligence, and instantly sent a nuncio into France. His instructions were to prevent, if possible, the calling of a national council, and to promise the re-assembling of the general council of Trent. The protestants had been too often dupes to such artifices as these, and, being fully convinced of the futility of general councils, they refused to submit to the council of Trent now for several good reasons. The pope, they said, who assembled the council, was to be judge in his own cause: the council would be chiefly composed of Italian bishops, who were vassals of the pope as a secular prince, and sworn to him as a bishop and head of the church: the legates would pack a majority, and bribe the poor bishops to vote: each article would be first settled at Rome, and then proposed by the legates to the council; the emperor, by advice of the late council of Constance, had given a safe conduct to John Huss, and to Jerom of Prague; however, when they appeared in the council, and proposed their doubts, the council condemned them to be burnt. The protestants had reason on their side, when they rejected this method of reforming; for the art of procuring a majority of votes is the soul of this system of church-government. This art consists in the ingenuity of finding out, and in the dexterity of addressing each man's weak side, his pride or his ignorance, his envy, his gravity, or his

avarice: and the possessing of this is the perfection of a legate of Rome.

During these disputes, the king died without issue, December 5, 1560, and his brother Charles IX. who was in the eleventh year of his age, succeeded him, December 13. The states met at the time proposed. The chancellor opened the session by an unanswerable speech on the ill policy of persecution; he represented the miseries of the protestants, and proposed an abatement of their sufferings, till their complaints could be heard in a national council. The prince of Conde, and the king of Navarre, were the heads of the protestant party, the Guises were the heads of their opponents; and the queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis, who had obtained the regency till the king's majority, and who began to dread the power of the Guises, leaned to the protestants, which was a grand event in their favour. After repeated meetings, and various warm debates, it was agreed as one side would not submit to a general council, nor the other to a national assembly, that a *conference* should be held at Poissy, between both parties, and an edict was made, that no persons should molest the protestants, that the imprisoned should be released, and the exiles called home.

The conference at Poissy was held, August 1561, in the presence of the king, the princes of the blood, the nobility, cardinals, prelates, and grandees of both parties. On the popish side, six cardinals, four bishops, and several dignified clergymen, and on the protestant about twelve of the

most famous reformed ministers, managed the dispute. Beza, who spoke well, knew the world, and had a ready wit, and a deal of learning, displayed all his powers in favour of the reformation. The papists reasoned where they could, and, where they could not, they railed. The conference ended where most public disputes have ended, that is, where they began; for great men never enter these lists without a previous determination not to submit to the disgrace of a public defeat.

At the close of the last reign the ruin of protestantism seemed inevitable; but now the reformation turned like a tide, overspread every place, and seemed to roll away all opposition, and in all probability, had it not been for one sad event, it would now have subverted popery in this kingdom. The king of Navarre, who was now lieutenant general of France, had hitherto been a zealous protestant; he had taken incredible pains to support the reformation, and had assured the Danish ambassador that, in a year's time, he would cause the true gospel to be preached throughout France. The Guises caballed with the pope and the king of Spain, and they offered to invest the king of Navarre with the kingdom of Sardinia, and to restore to him that part of the kingdom of Navarre, which lay in Spain, on condition of his renouncing protestantism. The lure was tempting, and the king deserted, and even persecuted, the protestants. Providence is never at a loss for means to effect its designs. The queen of Navarre, daughter of the last queen, who had hitherto preferred a dance before a ser-

mon, was shocked at the king's conduct, and instantly became a zealous protestant herself. She met with some unkind treatment, but nothing could shake her resolution. *Had I*, said she, *the kingdoms in my hand, I would throw them into the sea, rather than defile my conscience by going to mass.* This couragious profession saved her a deal of trouble and dispute!

The protestants began now to appear more publicly than before. The queen of Navarre caused Beza openly to solemnize a marriage in a noble family, after the Genevan manner. This, which was consummated near the court, emboldened the ministers, and they preached at the countess de Senignan's, guarded by the marshal's provosts. The nobility thought that the common people had as good a right to hear the gospel as theirselves, and caused the reformed clergy to preach without the walls of Paris. Their auditors were thirty or forty thousand people, divided into three companies, the women in the middle, surrounded by men on foot, and the latter by men on horseback; and, during the sermon, the governor of Paris placed soldiers to guard the avenues, and to prevent disturbances. The *morality* of this worship cannot be disputed, for, if God be worshipped in spirit and in truth, the place is indifferent. The *expediency* of it may be doubted; but in a persecution of forty years, the French protestants had learnt that their political masters did not consider how rational, but how formidable they were.

The Guises, and their associates, being quite dispirited, retired to their estates, and the queen regent, by the chancellor's advice, granted an edict to enable the protestants to preach in all parts of the kingdom, except in Paris, and in other walled cities. The parliaments of France had then the power of refusing to register royal edicts, and the chancellor had occasion for all his address to prevail over the scruples and ill humour of the parliament to procure the registering of this. He begged leave to say, that the question before them was one of those which had its difficulties, on whatever side it was viewed: that in the present case, one, of two things, must be chosen, either to put all the adherents of the new religion to the sword, or to banish them entirely, allowing them to dispose of their effects; that the first point could not be executed, since that party was too strong both in leaders and partizans; and, though it could be done, yet as it was staining the king's youth with the blood of so many of his subjects, perhaps when he came of age he would demand it at the hands of his governors; with regard to the second point, it was as little feasible, and could it be effected, it would be raising as many desperate enemies as exiles; that to enforce conformity against conscience, as matters stood now, was to lead the people to atheism. The edict at last was passed, Jan. 1562, but the house registered it with this clause, *in consideration of the present juncture of the times; but not approving of the new religion in any manner, and till the king shall otherwise*

appoint. So hard sat toleration on the minds of papists!

A minority was a period favourable to the views of the Guises, and this edict was a happy occasion of a pretence for commencing hostilities. The duke, instigated by his mother, went to Vassi, a town adjacent to one of his lordships, and, some of his retinue picking a quarrel with some protestants, who were hearing a sermon in a barn, he interested himself in it, wounded two hundred, and left sixty dead on the spot. This was the first protestant blood that was shed in civil war.

The news of this affair flew like lightning, and while the duke was marching to Paris with a thousand horse, the city and the provinces rose in arms. The chancellor was extremely afflicted to see both sides preparing for war, and endeavoured to dissuade them from it. The constable told him, *it did not belong to men of the long robe to give their judgment with relation to war.* To which he answered, that *though he did not bear arms, he knew when they ought to be used.* After this they excluded him from the councils of war.

The queen-regent, alarmed at the duke's approach to Paris, threw herself into the hands of the protestants, and ordered Conde to take up arms. War began, and barbarities and cruelties were practised on both sides. The duke of Guise was assassinated, the king of Navarre was killed at a siege, fifty thousand protestants were slain, and, after a year had been spent in these confusions, a peace was concluded, 1563. All, that the pro-

testants obtained, was an edict, which excluded the exercise of their religion from cities, and restrained it to their own families.

Peace did not continue long, for the protestants, having received intelligence, that the pope, the house of Austria, and the house of Guise, had conspired their ruin, and fearing that the king, and the court, were inclined to crush them, as their rights were every day infringed by new edicts, took up arms again in their own defence: 1567. The city of Rochelle declared for them, and it served them for an asylum for sixty years. They were assisted by queen Elizabeth of England, and by the German princes; and they obtained, at the conclusion of this second war, 1568, the revocation of all penal edicts, the exercise of their religion in their families, and the grant of six cities for their security.

The pope, the king of Spain, and the Guises, finding that they could not prevail while the wise chancellor retained his influence, formed a cabal against him, and got him removed. He resigned very readily, and retired to a country seat, where he spent the remainder of his days. A strange confusion followed in the direction of affairs, one edict allowed liberty, another forbad it; and it was plain to the protestants that their situation was very delicate and dangerous. The articles of the last peace had never been performed, and the papists every where insulted their liberties, so that, in three months time, two thousand Hugonots were murdered, and the murderers went

unpunished. War broke out again: 1568. Queen Elizabeth assisted the protestants with money, the Count Palatine helped them with men, the queen of Navarre parted with her rings and jewels to support them, and the prince of Conde being slain, she declared her son, prince Henry, the head and protector of the protestant cause, and caused medals to be struck with these words, *a safe peace, a complete victory, a glorious death.* Her majesty did every thing in her power for the advancement of the cause of religious liberty, and she used to say, that *liberty of conscience ought to be preferred before honours, dignities, and life itself.* She caused the new testament, the catechism, and the liturgy of Geneva, to be translated, and printed at Rochelle. She abolished popery, and established protestantism in her own dominions. In her leisure hours, she expressed her zeal by working tapestries with her own hands, in which she represented the monuments of that liberty, which she procured by shaking off the yoke of the pope. One suit consisted of twelve pieces. On each piece was represented some scripture history of *deliverance;* Israel coming out of Egypt, Joseph's release from prison, or something of the like kind. On the top of each piece were these words, *where the spirit is there is liberty,* and in the corners of each were broken chains, fetters, and gibbets. One piece represented a congregation at mass, and a fox, in a friar's habit, officiating as a priest, grinning horribly and saying, *the Lord be with you.* The pieces were fashionable patterns, and

dexterously directed the needles of the ladies to help forward the reformation.

After many negotiations a peace was concluded, 1570, and the free exercise of religion was allowed in all but walled cities; two cities in every province were assigned to the protestants; they were to be admitted into all universities, schools, hospitals, public offices, royal, seignioral, and corporate, and, to render the peace of everlasting duration, a match was proposed between Henry of Navarre and the sister of king Charles. These articles were accepted, the match was agreed to, every man's sword was put up in its sheath, and the queen of Navarre, her son, king Henry, the princes of the blood, and the principal protestants, went to Paris to celebrate the marriage. A few days after the marriage, the Admiral, who was one of the principal protestant leaders, was assassinated. This alarmed the king of Navarre, and the prince of Conde, but, the king and his mother promising to punish the assassin they were quiet. The next Sunday, being St. Bartholemew's day, when the bells rang for morning prayers, the duke of Guise, brother of the last, appeared with a great number of soldiers, and citizens, and began to murder the Hugonots, the wretched Charles appeared at the windows of his palace, and endeavoured to shoot those who fled, crying to their pursuers, *kill them, kill them.* The massacre continued seven days, seven hundred houses were pillaged; five thousand people perished in Paris; neither age, nor sex, nor even women with child were spared; one but-

cher boasted to the king that he had hewn down a hundred and fifty in one night. The rage ran from Paris to the provinces, where twenty five thousand more were cruelly slain; the queen of Navarre was poisoned; and, during the massacre, the king offered the king of Navarre, and the young prince of Conde, son of the late prince, if they would not renounce Hugonotism, either *death*, *mass*, or *bastile;* for he said, he would not have one left to reproach him. This bloody affair does not lie between Charles IX. his mother Catharine de Medicis, and the duke of Guise, for the church of Rome, and the court of Spain, by exhibiting public rejoicings on the occasion, have adopted the whole for their own, or, at least, have claimed a large share.

Would any one after this propose passive obedience, and non-resistance, to French protestants? Or, can we wonder, that abhorring a church, who offered to embrace them with hands reeking with the blood of their brethren, they put on their armour again, and commenced a fourth civil war? The late massacre raised up also another party, called *politicians*, who proposed to banish the family of Guise from France, to remove the queen-mother and the Italians from the government, and to restore peace to the nation. This faction was headed by Montmorency, who had an eye to the crown. During these troubles, the king died, in the twenty fifth year of his age: 1574. Charles had a lively little genius; he composed a book on hunting, and valued himself on his skill in phy-

siognomy. He thought courage consisted in swearing and taunting at his courtiers. His diversions were hunting, music, women and wine. His court was a common sewer of luxury and impiety, and while his favourites were fleecing his people, he employed himself in the making of rhymes. The part he acted in the Bartholomean tragedy, the worst crime that was ever perpetrated in any christian country, will mark his reign with infamy to the end of time.

Henry III. who succeeded his brother Charles, was first despised, and then hated, by all his subjects. He was so proud that he set rails round his table, and affected the pomp of an eastern king: and so mean that he often walked in procession with a beggarly brotherhood, with a string of beads in his hand, and a whip at his girdle. He was so credulous that he took the sacrament with the Duke of Guise, and with the Cardinal of Lorrain, his brother; and so treacherous that he caused the assassination of them both. He boasted of being a chief adviser of the late massacre, and the protestants abhorred him for it. The papists hated him for his adherence to the Hugonot house of Bourbon, and for the edicts which he sometimes granted in favour of the protestants, though his only aim was to weaken the Guises. The ladies held him in execration for his unnatural practices: and the dutchess of Montpensier talked of clipping his hair, and of making him a monk. His heavy taxes, which were consumed by his favourites, excited the populace against him, and, while his

kingdom was covering with carnage, and drenching in blood, he was training lapdogs to tumble, and parrots to prate.

In this reign, was formed the famous *league*, which reduced France to the most miserable condition that could be. The chief promoter of it was the duke of Guise. The pretence was the preservation of the catholic religion. The chief articles were three. *The defence of the catholic religion. The establishment of Henry III. on the throne. The maintaining of the liberty of the kingdom, and the assembling of the states.* Those, who entered into the league, promised to obey such a general as should be chosen for the defence of it, and the whole was confirmed by oath. The weak Henry subscribed it at first in hopes of subduing the Hugonots; the queen-mother, the Guises, the Pope, the King of Spain, many of the clergy, and multitudes of the people, became *leaguers*. When Henry perceived that Guise was aiming by this league to dethrone him, he favoured the protestants, and they obtained an edict, for the free exercise of their religion: but edicts were vain things against the power of the league, and three civil wars raged in this reign.

Guise's pretended zeal for the romish religion allured the clergy, and France was filled with seditious books and sermons. The preachers of the league were the most furious of all sermon-mongers. They preached up the excellence of the established church, the necessity of uniformity, the horror of hugonotism, the merit of killing the *ty-*

rant on the throne, (for so they called the king) the genealogy of the house of Guise, and every thing else that could inflame the madness of party-rage. It is not enough to say that these abandoned clergymen disgraced their office, truth obliges us to add, they were protected, and preferred to dignities in the church, both in France and Spain.

The nearer the Guises approached to the crown, the more were they inflamed at the sight of it. They obliged the king to forbid the exercise of the protestant religion. They endeavoured to exclude the King of Navarre, who was now the next heir to the throne, from the succession. They began to act so haughtily that Henry caused both the duke and the cardinal to be assassinated. The next year, 1589, he himself was assassinated by a friar. Religion flourishes where nothing else can grow, and the reformation diffused itself more and more in this reign. The exiles at Geneva filled France with a new translation of the bible, with books, letters, catechisms, hymns, and preachers, and the people, contrasting the religion of Christ with the religion of Rome, entertained a most serious aversion for the latter.

In the last king ended the family of Valois, and the next heir was Henry IV. of the house of Bourbon, King of Navarre. His majesty had been educated a protestant, and had been the protector of the party, and the protestants had reason to expect much from him on his ascending the throne of France: but he had many difficulties to

surmount, for could the men, who would not bear a hugonot subject, bear a hugonot king? Some of the old faction disputed his title, and all insisted on a *christian* king. Henry had for him on the one side, almost all the nobility, the whole court of the late king, all protestant states and princes, and the old hugonot troops: on the other he had against him, the common people, most of the great cities, all the parliaments except two, the greatest part of the clergy, the Pope, the King of Spain, and most catholic states. Four years his majesty deliberated, negociated, and fought, but could not gain Paris. At length, the league set up a king of the house of Guise, and Henry found that the throne was inaccessible to all but papists; he therefore renounced heresy before Dr. Benoit, a moderate papist, and professed his conversion to popery. Paris opened its gates, the pope sent an absolution, and Henry became a *most christian king*. Every man may rejoice that his virtue is not put to the trial of refusing a crown!

When his majesty got to his palace in Paris, he thought proper to conciliate his new friends by shewing them particular esteem, and played at cards the first evening with a lady of the house of Guise, the most violent leaguer in all the party. His old servants who had shed rivers of blood to bring the house of Bourbon to the throne, thought themselves neglected. While the protestants were slighted, and while those, who had followed the league, were disengaging themselves from it on advantageous conditions, one of the king's old

friends said; "we do not envy your killing the fatted calf for the prodigal son, provided you do not sacrifice the obedient son to make the better entertainment for the prodigal. I dread those bargains, in which things are given up, and nothing got but mere words, the words of those who hitherto have had no words at all."

By ascending the throne of France, Henry had risen to the highest degree of wretchedness. He had offered violence to his conscience by embracing popery, and he had stirred up a general discontent among the French protestants. The queen of England, and the protestant states, reproached him bitterly, the league refused to acknowledge him till the pope had absolved him in form, the king of Spain caballed for the crown, several cities held out against him, many of the clergy thought him an hypocrite, and refused to insert his name in the public prayers of the church, the lawyers published libels against him, the jesuits threatened to assassinate him, and actually attempted to do it. In this delicate and difficult situation, though his majesty manifested the frailty of humanity by renouncing protestantism, yet he extricated himself and his subjects from the fatal labyrinths in which they were all involved, so that he deservedly acquired even from his enemies the epithet *Great*, though his friends durst not give him that of *Good*.

The king had been so well acquainted with the protestants, that he perfectly knew their principles, and, could he have acted as he would, he would

have instantly granted them all that they wanted. Their enemies had falsely said, that they were enemies to government: but the king knew better, and he also knew that the claims of his family would have been long ago buried in oblivion, had not the protestants supported them. Marshal Biron had been one chief instrument of bringing him to the throne. The marshal was not a good hugonot, nor did he profess to be a papist: but he espoused the protestant party, for he was a man of great sense, and he hated violence in religion; and there were many more of the same cast. Parties, however, ran so high that precipitance would have lost all, and Henry was obliged to proceed by slow and cautious steps.

The deputies of the reformed churches soon waited on his majesty to congratulate him, and to pray for liberty. The king allowed them to hold a general assembly, and offered them some slight satisfaction: but the hardy veteran hugonots, who had spent their days in the field, and who knew also that persons, who were of approved fidelity, might venture to give the king their advice without angering him, took the liberty of reminding him that they would not be paid in compliments for so many signal services. Their ancestors, and they had supported his right to the crown along with their own right to liberty of conscience, and as Providence had granted the one, they expected that the other would not be denied. The king felt the force of these remonstrances, and ventured to allow them to hold provincial assemblies; after

a while, to convene a national synod, and, as soon as he could, he granted them the famous EDICT OF NANTZ.

The Edict of Nantz, which was called *perpetual* and *irrevocable*, and which contained ninety-two articles, beside fifty-six secret articles, granted to the protestants liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of religion; many churches in all parts of France, and judges of their own persuasion; a free access to all places of honour and dignity, great sums of money to pay off their troops; an hundred places as pledges of their future security, and certain funds to maintain both their preachers and their garrisons. The king did not send this edict to be registered in parliament till the pope's legate was gone out of the kingdom, so that it did not get there till the next year. Some of the old party in the house boggled at it very much, and particularly because the hugonots were hereby qualified for offices, and places of trust: but his majesty sent for some of the chiefs to his closet, made them a most pathetic speech on the occasion, and with some difficulty brought them to a compliance. It is easy to conceive that the king might be very pathetic on this occasion, for he had seen and suffered enough to make any man so: the meanest hugonot soldier could not avoid the pathos, if he related his campaigns. But it is very credible, that it was not the pathos of his majesty's language, but the power in his hand, that affected these intolerant souls.

No nation ever made a more noble struggle for recovering liberty of conscience out of the rapacious hands of the papal priesthood than the French. And one may venture to defy the most sanguine friend to intolerance to prove, that a free toleration hath, in any country, at any period, produced such calamities in society as those, which persecution produced in France. After a million of brave men had been destroyed, after nine civil wars, after four pitched battles, after the besieging of several hundred places, after more than three hundred engagements, after poisoning, burning, assassinating, massacreing, murdering in every form, France is forced to submit to what her wise chancellor de L'Hospital had at first proposed, A FREE TOLERATION. Most of the zealous leaguers voted for it, because *they had found by experience,* they said, *that violent proceedings in matters of religion prove more destructive than edifying.* A noble testimony from enemies mouths!

France now began to taste the sweets of peace, the King employed himself in making his subjects happy, and the far greater part of his subjects endeavoured to render him so. The protestants applied themselves to the care of their churches, and as they had at this time a great many able ministers, they flourished, and increased the remaining part of this reign. The doctrine of their churches was calvinism, and their discipline was presbyterian, after the Genevan plan. Their churches were supplied by able pastors; their universities were adorned with learned and pious professors.

such as Casaubon, Daille, and others, whose praises are in all the reformed churches; their provincial, and national synods were regularly convened, and their people were well governed. Much pains were taken with the king to alienate his mind from his protestant subjects: but no motives could influence him. He knew the worth of the men, and he protected them till his death. This great prince was hated by the popish clergy for his lenity, and was stabbed in his coach by the execrable Ravillac, (May 14, 1610) whose name inspires one with horror and pain.

Lewis XIII. was not quite nine years of age, when he succeeded his father Henry. The first act of the queen-mother, who had the regency during the king's minority, was the confirmation of the edict of Nantz. Lewis confirmed it again, in 1614, at his majority, promising to observe it inviolably. The protestants deserved a confirmation of their privileges at his hands; for they had taken no part in the civil wars and disturbances, which had troubled his minority. They had been earnestly solicited to intermeddle with government: but they had wisely avoided it.

Lewis was a weak ambitious man; he was jealous of his power to excess, though he did not know wherein it consisted. He was so void of prudence, that he could not help exalting his flatterers into favourites, and his favourites into excessive power. He was so timorous that his favourites became the objects of his hatred, the moment after he had elevated them to authority; and

he was so callous that he never lamented a favourite's death or downfall. By a solemn act of devotion, attended with all the farce of pictures, masses, processions, and festivals, he consecrated his person, his dominions, his crown and his subjects to the Virgin Mary, desiring her to defend his kingdom, and to inspire him with grace to lead a holy life. The popish clergy adored him for thus sanctifying their superstitions by his example, and he, in return, lent them his power to punish his protestant subjects, whom he hated. His panegyrists call him Lewis *the just:* but they ought to acknowledge that his majesty did nothing to merit the title till he found himself a dying.

Lewis's prime minister was an artful, enterprizing clergyman, who, before his elevation, was a country bishop, and, after it, was known by the title of Cardinal de Richlieu: but the most proper title for his eminence is that, which some historians give him, of the *Jupiter Mactator* of France. He was a man of great ability: but of no merit. Had his virtue been as great as his capacity, he ought not to have been intrusted with government, because all cardinals take an oath to the pope, and although an oath does not bind a bad man, yet as the taking of it gives him credit, so the breach of it ruins all his prospects among those, with whom he hath taken it.

The jesuits, who had been banished, in 1594, from France for attempting the life of Henry IV. had been recalled, in 1604, and restored to their houses; and one of their society, under pretence of

being responsible as an hostage for the whole fraternity, was allowed to attend the king. The jesuits, by this mean, gained the greatest honour and power, and, as they excelled in learning, address, and intrigue, they knew how to obtain the king's ear, and how to improve his credulity to their own advantage.

This dangerous society was first formed in 1534 by Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish deserter, who, being frighted out of the army by a wound, took it into his head to go on pilgrimage, and to form a religious society for the support of the catholic faith. The popes, who knew how to avail themselves of enthusiasm in church government, directed this grand spring of human action to secular purposes, and, by canonizing the founder, and arranging the order, elevated the society in a few years to a height that astonished all Europe. It was one opinion of this society, that the authority of kings is inferior to that of the people, and that they may be punished by the people in certain cases. It was another maxim with them, that sovereign princes have received from the hand of God a sword to punish heretics. The jesuits did not invent these doctrines; but they drew such consequences from them as were most prejudicial to the public tranquillity: for, from the conjunction of these two principles, they concluded that an heretical prince ought to be deposed, and that heresy ought to be extirpated by fire and sword, in case it could not be extirpated otherwise. In conformity to the first of these principles, two kings of France had

been murdered successively, under pretext that they were fautors of heretics. The parliament in this reign, 1615, condemned the first as a pernicious tenet, and declared that the authority of monarchs was dependent only on God: but the last principle, that related to the extirpation of heresy, as it flattered the court and the clergy, came into vogue. *Jus divinum* was the test of sound orthodoxy, and this reasoning became popular argumentation; *Princes* MAY *put heretics to death; therefore they* OUGHT *to put them to death.*

Richlieu, who had wriggled himself into power, by publishing a scandalous libel on the protestants of France, advised the king to establish his authority, by extirpating the intestine evils of the kingdom. He assured his majesty that the hugonots had the power of doing him mischief, and that it was a principle with them, that kings might be deposed by the people. The protestants replied to his invectives, and exposed the absurdity of his reasoning. Richlieu reasoned thus: John Knox the Scotch reformer, did not believe the divine authority of kings. Calvin held a correspondence with Knox, therefore Calvin did not believe it. The French reformed church derived its doctrine from Calvin's church of Geneva, therefore the first hugonots did not believe it. The first hugonots did not believe it, therefore the present hugonots do not believe it. No man who valued the reputation of a man of sense, would have scaled the walls of preferment with such a ridiculous ladder as this!

The king, intoxicated with despotic principles, followed the fatal advice of his minister, and began with his patrimonial province of Bearn, where he caused the catholic religion to be established, 1620. The hugonots broke out into violence at this attack on their liberties, whence the king took an opportunity to recover several places from them, and at last made peace with them on condition of their demolishing all their fortifications except those of Montauban and Rochelle. Arnoux, the Jesuit, who was a creature of Richlieu's, was, at that time, confessor to Lewis *the just.*

The politic Richlieu invariably pursued his design of rendering his master absolute. By one art he subdued the nobility, by another the parliaments, and, as civil and religious liberty, live and die together, he had engines of all sorts to extirpate heresy. He pretended to have formed the design of re-uniting the two churches of protestants and catholics. He drew off from the protestant party the dukes of Sully, Bouillon, Lesdeguieres, Rohan, and many of the first quality: for he had the world, and its glory to go to market withal; and he had to do with a race of men, who were very different from their ancestors. Most of them had either died for their profession, or had fled out of the kingdom, and several of them had submitted to practise mean trades, in foreign countries, for their support; but these were endeavouring to serve God and mammon, and his eminence was a fit casuist for such consciences.

The protestants had resolved, in a general assembly, to die rather than to submit to the loss of their liberties; but their king was weak, their prime minister was wicked, their clerical enemies were powerful and implacable, and they were obliged to bear those infractions of edicts, which their oppressors made every day. At length, Richlieu determined to put a period to their hopes by the taking of Rochelle. The city was besieged both by sea and land, and the efforts of the besieged were at last overcome by famine, for they had lived without bread for thirteen weeks, and, of eighteen thousand citizens, there were not above five thousand left. The strength of the protestants was broken by this stroke. Montauban agreed now to demolish its works, and the *just* king confirmed anew the *perpetual* and *irrevocable* edict of Nantz, as far as it concerned a free exercise of religion.

The cardinal, not content with temporal power, had still another claim on the protestants of a spiritual kind. Cautionary towns must be given up to that, and conscience to this. He suffered the edict to be infringed every day, and he was determined not to stop till he had established an uniformity in the church, without the obtaining of which, he thought, something was wanting to his master's power. The protestants did all that prudence could suggest. They sent the famous Amyraut to complain to the king of the infraction of their edicts. Mr. Amyraut was a proper person to go on this business. He had an extreme at-

tachment to the doctrine of passive obedience, this rendered him agreeable to the court; and he had declared for no obedience in matters of conscience, and this made him dear to the protestants. The synod ordered him not to make his speech to the king kneeling, as the deputies of the former synod had done; but to procure the restoring of the privilege, which they formerly enjoyed, of speaking to the king, standing, as the other ecclesiastics of the kingdom were allowed to do. The cardinal strove, for a whole fortnight, to make Amyraut to submit to this tacit acknowledgment of the clerical character in the popish clergy, and of the want of it in the reformed ministers. But Amyraut persisted in his claim, and was introduced to the king as the synod had desired. The whole court was charmed with the deputy's talents and deportment. Richlieu had many conferences with him, and if negociation could have accommodated the dispute between arbitrary power and upright consciences, it would have been settled now. He was treated with the utmost politeness, and dismissed. If he had not the pleasure of reflecting that he had obtained the liberty of his party, he had, however, the peace that ariseth from a consciousness of having used a proper mean to obtain it. The same mean was tried, some time after, by the inimitable Du Bose, whom his countrymen call a PERFECT ORATOR, but alas! he was eloquent in vain.

The affairs of the protestants waxed every day worse and worse. They saw the clouds gathering,

and they dreaded the weight of the storm; but they knew not whither to flee. Some fled to England, but no peace was there. Laud, the tyrant of the English church, had a Richlieu's heart without his head; he persecuted them, and, in conjunction with Wren, and other such churchmen, drove them back to the infinite damage of the manufacturers of the kingdom. It must affect every liberal eye to see such professors as Amyraut, Chappel, and De la Place, such ministers as Mestrezat, and Blondel, who would have been an honour to any community, driven to the sad alternative of flying their country, or of violating their consciences. But their time was not yet fully come.

Cardinal Richlieu's hoary head went down to the grave, 1642, without the tears of his master, and with the hatred of all France. The king soon followed him, 1648, complaining, in the words of Job, *my soul is weary of my life.* The protestants had increased greatly in numbers in this reign, though they had lost their power; for they were now computed to exceed two millions. So true it is, that violent measures in religion weaken the church that employs them.

Lewis XIV. was only in the fifth year of his age at the demise of his father. The queen-mother was appointed sole regent during his minority, and cardinal Mazarine, a creature of Richlieu's, was her prime minister. The edict of Nantz was confirmed, 1643, by the regent, and again by the king at his majority, 1652. But it was always the cool determination of the minister to follow the late

Cardinal's plan, and to revoke it as soon as he could, and he strongly impressed the mind of the king with the expediency of it.

Lewis, who was a perfect tool to the Jesuits, followed the advice of Mazarine, of his confessors, and of the clergy about him, and as soon as he took the management of affairs into his own hand, he made a firm resolution to destroy the protestants. He tried to weaken them by buying off their great men, and he had but too much success. Some indeed, were superior to this state-trick, and it was a noble answer which the Marquis de Bougy gave, when he was offered a marshal's staff, and any government that he might make choice of, provided he would turn papist. *Could I be prevailed on,* said he, *to betray my God, for a marshal of France's staff, I might betray my king for a thing of much less consequence; but I will do neither of them, but rejoice to find that my services are acceptable, and that the religion, which I profess, is the only obstacle to my reward.* Was his majesty so little versed in the knowledge of mankind, as not to know that saleable virtue is seldom worth buying?

The king used another art as mean as the former. He exhorted the bishops to take care, that the points in controversy betwixt the catholics and calvinists should be much insisted on by the clergy, in their sermons, especially in those places that were mostly inhabited by the latter, and that a good number of missionaries should be sent among them to convert them to the religion of their ancestors.

It should seem, at first view, that the exercise of his majesty's power in this way would be formidable to the protestants, for, as the king had the nomination of eighteen archbishops, a hundred and nine bishops, and seven hundred and fifty abbots, and as these dignitaries governed the inferior clergy, it is easy to see that all the popish clergy of France were creatures of the court, and several of them were men of good learning. But the protestants had no fears on this head. They were excellent scholars, masters of the controversy, hearty in the service, and the mortifications to which they had been long accustomed, had taught them that temperate coolness, which is so essential in the investigating and supporting of truth. They published, therefore, unanswerable arguments for their non-conformity. The famous Mr. Claude, pastor of the church at Charenton, near Paris, wrote *a defence of the reformation*, which all the clergy of France could not answer. The bishops, however, answered the protestants all at once, by procuring an edict which forbad them to print.

The king, in prosecution of his design, excluded the calvinists from his houshold, and from all other employments of honour and profit; he ordered all the courts of justice, erected by virtue of the edict of Nantz, to be abolished, and in lieu of them made several laws in favour of the catholic religion, which debarred from all liberty of abjuring the catholic doctrine, and restrained those protestants who had embraced it, from returning to their former opinions, under severe punish-

ments. He ordered soldiers to be quartered in their houses till they changed their religion. He shut up their churches, and forbad the ministerial function to their clergy; and, where his commands were not readily obeyed, he levelled their churches with the ground. At last, Oct. 22, 1685, he revoked the edict of Nantz, and banished them from the kingdom.

" A thousand dreadful blows, says Mr. Saurin, were struck at our afflicted churches before that which destroyed them : for our enemies, if I may use such an expression, not content with seeing our ruin, endeavoured to taste it. One while edicts were published against those who, foreseeing the calamities that threatened our churches, and not having power to prevent them, desired only the sad consolation of not being spectators of their ruin. Another while, against those, who, through their weakness, had denied their religion, and who, not being able to bear the remorse of their consciences, desired to return to their first profession. One while, our pastors were forbidden to exercise their discipline on those of their flocks, who had abjured the truth. Another while, children of seven years of age were allowed to embrace doctrines, which, the church of Rome allows, are not level to the capacities of adults. A college was suppressed, and then a church shut up. Sometimes we were forbid to convert infidels ; and sometimes to confirm those in the truth, whom we had instructed from their infancy ; and our pastors were forbidden to exercise their

pastoral office any longer in one place than three years. Sometimes the printing of our books was prohibited, and sometimes those which we had printed were taken away. One while, we were not suffered to preach in a church, and another while we were punished for preaching on its ruins; and at length we were forbidden to worship God in public at all. Now, we were banished, then, we were forbidden to quit the kingdom on pain of death. Here, we saw the glorious rewards of some who betrayed their religion; and there, we beheld others, who had the courage to confess it, a haling to a dungeon, a scaffold, or a galley. Here, we saw our persecutors drawing on a sledge the dead bodies of those who had expired on the rack. There, we beheld a false friar tormenting a dying man, who was terrified on the one hand, with the fear of hell if he should apostatize, and, on the other, with the fear of leaving his children without bread, if he should continue in the faith: yonder, they were tearing children from their parents, while the tender parents were shedding more tears for the loss of their souls, than for that of their bodies, or lives."

It is impossible to meet with parallel instances of cruelty among the heathens in their persecutions of the primitive christians. The bloody butchers, who were sent to them under the name of *dragoons*, invented a thousand torments to tire their patience, and to force an abjuration from them. "They cast some," says Mr. Claude, "into large fires, and took them out when they were

half roasted. They hanged others with large ropes under their arm-pits, and plunged them several times into wells, till they promised to renounce their religion. They tied them like criminals on the rack, and poured wine with a funnel into their mouths, till, being intoxicated, they declared that they consented to turn catholics. Some they slashed and cut with penknives, others they took by the nose with red hot tongs, and led them up and down the rooms till they promised to turn catholics." These cruel proceedings made eight hundred thousand persons quit the kingdom.

If the same actions may proceed from different principles, it must be always a hazardous, and often an unjust attempt, to assign the true motives of men's conduct. But public actions fall under public notice, and they deserve censure, or commendation, according to the obvious good, or evil, which they produce in society. The art of governing requires a superior genius, and a superior genius hides, like a lofty mountain, its summit in the clouds. In some cases, a want of capacity and in others a fund of selfishness, would prevent a subject's comprehension of his prince's projects, and consequently, his approbation of his prince's measures; and for these reasons, the cabinets of princes should be the least accessible, and their hearts the most impenetrable parts of their dominions: but when the prince would reduce his projects to practice, and cause his imaginations to become rules of action to his subjects, he ought to

give a reason for his conduct, and, if his conduct be rational, he will do so; for as all law is founded in reason, so reason is its best support. In such a case, the nature of the thing, as well as the respect, that is due to the rank of the prince, would require us to be either mute, or modest, on the *motives;* and the same reasons would require us to consider the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the *law;* for if it be not reason, it ought not to be law; and nothing can prevent our feeling the good, or ill *effects* of the whole action.

To disfranchise and to banish, to imprison, and to execute, some members of society, are partial evils: but they are also sometimes general benefits, and the excision of a part may be essential to the preservation of the whole. The inflicting of these punishments on the French protestants might possibly be essential to the safety of the whole nation; or perhaps his majesty might think it essential to monarchy; perhaps the clergy might think it essential to orthodoxy; perhaps the financiers, and the king's mistresses, might think it essential to the making of their fortunes: but we have nothing to do with these private views: the questions are,—Was it essential to the general safety and happiness of the kingdom? Was it agreeable to the unalterable dictates of right reason? Was it consistent with the sound approved maxims of civil polity? In these views, we venture to say, that the repeal of the edict of Nantz, which had been the security of the protestants, was an action irrational and irreligious, inhuman and ungrateful,

perfidious, impolitic and weak. If respect to religion and right reason, were to compose a just title for the perpetrator of such a crime, it might call him *a most inhuman tyrant:* certainly it would not call him *a most christian king.*

It was an *irrational* act; for there was no fitness between the punishment and the supposed crime. The crime was a mental error; but penal laws have no internal operation on the mind. It was *irreligious*, for religion ends where persecution begins. An action may begin in religion, but when it proceeds to injure a person it ceaseth to be religion; it is only a denomination, and a method of acting. It was *inhuman*, for it caused the most savage cruelties. It was as *ungrateful* in the house of Bourbon to murder their old supporters as it was magnanimous in the protestants, under their severest persecutions, to tell their murderer, they *thought that blood well employed, which had been spilt in supporting the just claims of the house of Bourbon, to the throne.* It was, to the last degree, *perfidious;* for the edict of Nantz had been given by Henry IV. for a PERPETUAL and IRREVOCABLE decree; it had been confirmed by the succeeding princes, and Lewis XIV. himself had assigned in the declaration the loyalty of the protestants as a reason of the confirmation. *My subjects of the pretended reformed religion*, says he, *have given me unquestionable proofs of their affection and loyalty.* It had been sworn to by the governors and lieutenants general of the provinces,

by the courts of parliament, and by all the officers of the courts of justice. What national perjury! Is it enough to say as this perjured monarch did, *My grandfather Henry IV. loved you, and was obliged to you. My father, Louis XIII. feared you, and wanted your assistance. But I neither love you, nor fear you ; and do not want your services!* The *ill policy* of it is confessed on all sides. Where is the policy of banishing eight hundred thousand people, who declare that a free exercise of religion ought not to injure any man's civil rights, and, on this principle, support the king's claim to the crown, as long as he executes the duty of his office? Where is the policy of doing this in order to secure a set of men, who openly avow these propositions, *the Pope is superior to all law: It is right to kill that prince, whom the Pope excommunicates: if a prince become an Arian, the people ought to depose him?* Where is the policy of banishing men, whose doctrines have kept in the kingdom, during the space of two hundred and fifty years, the sum of two hundred and fifty millions of livres, which, at a moderate calculation, would otherwise have gone to Rome for indulgences, and annates, and other such trash? Who was the politician, the Count d'Avaux, who, while he was ambassador in Holland, offered to prove that the refugees had carried out of France more than twenty millions of property, and advised the king to recall it by recalling its owners? or the king, who refused to avail himself of this advice? Who was the politi-

cian, the intolerant Lewis, who drove his protestant soldiers and sailors out of his service; or the benevolent prince of Orange, who, in one year raised three regiments of French refugee soldiers, commanded by their own officers, and manned three vessels, at the same time, with refugee sailors, to serve the Dutch, while France wanted men to equip her fleets? The protestants, having been for some time, excluded from all offices, and not being suffered to enjoy any civil or military employments, had applied themselves either to manufactures, or to the improving of their money in trade. Was it policy to banish a Mons. Vincent, who employed more than five hundred workmen? Was policy on the side of that prince, who demolished manufactories, or on the side of those who set them up, by receiving the refugee manufacturers into their kingdoms? Had England derived no more advantage from its hospitality to the refugees than the silk manufacture, it would have amply repaid the nation. The memorials of the intendants of the provinces were full of such complaints. The intendant of Rouen, said, that the refugees had carried away the manufacture of hats. The intendant of Poitiers said, they had taken away the manufacture of druggets. In some provinces the commerce was diminished several millions of livres in a year, and in some, half the revenue was sunk. Was it policy in the king to provoke the protestant states, and princes, who had always been his faithful allies against the house of Austria, and, at the same time, to supply them

with eight hundred thousand new subjects? After all, it was a *weak* and foolish step, for the protestants were not extirpated. There remained almost as many in the kingdom as were driven out of it, and even at this day, though now and then a preacher hath been hanged, and now and then a family murdered,* yet the opulent province of Languedoc is full of protestants, the Lutherans have the university of Alsace, neither art nor cruelty can rid the kingdom of them, and some of the greatest ornaments of France now plead for a FREE TOLERATION.

The refugees charge their banishment on the *clergy* of France, and they give very good proof of their assertion; nor do they mistake, when they affirm that their sufferings are a part of the RELIGION of Rome, for Pope Innocent XI. highly approved of this persecution. He wrote a brief to the king, in which he assured him that what he had done against the heretics of his kingdom would be immortalized by the elogies of the catholic church. He delivered a discourse in the consistory, in which he said, *the most christian king's zeal, and* PIETY, *did wonderfully appear in extirpating heresy, and in clearing his whole kingdom of it in a very few months.* He ordered *Te Deum* to be sung, to give thanks to God for this return of the heretics into the pale of the church, which was accordingly done with great pomp. If this persecution were clerical policy, it was bad, and, if it

* Written, 1775.

were the religion of the french clergy, it was worse. In either case the church procured great evil to the state. Lewis XIV. was on the pinnacle of glory at the conclusion of the peace of Nimeguen; his dominion was, as it were, established over all Europe, and was become an inevitable prejudice to neighbouring nations; but here he began to extirpate heresy, and here he began to fall, nor has the nation ever recovered its grandeur since.

Protestant powers opened their arms to these venerable exiles. Abbadie, Ancillon, and others, fled to Berlin. Basnage, Claude, Du Bose, and many more, found refuge in Holland. The famous Dr. Allix, with numbers of his brethren, came to England. A great many families went to Geneva, among which was that of Saurin.

Mr. Saurin, the father of our author, was an eminent protestant lawyer at Nismes, who, after the repeal of the edict of Nantz, retired to Geneva. He was considered at Geneva as the oracle of the French language, the nature and beauty of which he thoroughly understood. He had four sons, whom he trained up in learning, and who were all so remarkably eloquent, that eloquence was said to be hereditary in the family. The Reverend Lewis Saurin, one of the sons, was afterwards pastor of a french church in London. Saurin, the father, died at Geneva. James, the author of the following sermons, was born at Nismes, in 1677, and went with his father into exile to Geneva, where he profited much in learning.

In the seventeenth year of his age, Saurin quitted his studies to go into the army, and made a campaign as a cadet in lord Galloway's company. The next year, his captain gave him a pair of colours in his regiment, which then served in Piedmont: but the year after, the duke of Savoy, under whom Saurin served, having made his peace with France, Saurin quitted the profession of arms, for which he was never designed, and returned to Geneva to study.

Geneva was, at that time, the residence of some of the best scholars in Europe, who were in the highest estimation in the republic of letters. Pictet, Lewis Tronchin, and Philip Mestrezat, were professors of divinity there; Alphonso Turretin was professor of sacred history, and Chouet, who was afterwards taken from his professorship, and admitted into the government of the republic, was professor of natural philosophy. The other departments were filled with men, equally eminent in their several professions. Some of them were natives of Geneva, others were exiles from Italy and France, several were of noble families, and all of them were men of eminent piety. Under these great masters Saurin became a student, and particularly applied himself to divinity, as he now began to think of devoting himself to the ministry. To dedicate one's self to the ministry in a wealthy, flourishing church, where rich benefices are every day becoming vacant, requires very little virtue, and sometimes only a strong propensity to vice: but to choose to be a minister in such a poor, ba-

nished, persecuted church as that of the French protestants, argues a noble contempt of the world, and a supreme love to God, and to the souls of men. These are the best testimonials, however, of a young minister, whose profession is, not to enrich, but to *save himself, and those who hear him.*

After Mr. Saurin had finished his studies, he visited Holland and England. In the first he made a very short stay; but in the last he staid almost five years, and preached with great acceptance among his fellow exiles in London. Of his person an idea may be formed by the annexed copper-plate,* which is said to be a great likeness, and for which I am indebted to my ingenious friend Mr. Thomas Holloway. His dress was that of the French clergy, the gown and cassock. His address was perfectly genteel, a happy compound of the affable and the grave, at an equal distance from rusticity and foppery. His voice was strong, clear, and harmonious, and he never lost the management of it. His style was pure, unaffected, and eloquent, sometimes plain, and sometimes flowery; but never improper, as it was always adapted to the audience, for whose sake he spoke. An Italian acquaintance of mine, who often heard him at the Hague, tells me, that in the introductions of his sermons he used to deliver himself in a tone modest and low; in the body of the sermon which was adapted to the understanding, he was plain, clear, and argumentative, pausing at the

* Prefixed to the 1st. Vol. of the translation.

close of each period, that he might discover, by the countenances and motions of his hearers, whether they were convinced by his reasoning: in his addresses to the wicked, (and it is a folly to preach as if there were none in our assemblies, Mr. Saurin knew mankind too well) he was often sonorous, but oftener a weeping suppliant at their feet. In the one he sustained the authoritative diginity of his office, in the other he expressed his master's, and his own benevolence to bad men, *praying them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. v. 20. In general, adds my friend, his preaching resembled a plentiful shower of dew, softly and imperceptibly insinuating itself into the minds of his numerous hearers, as the dew into the pores of plants, till the whole church was dissolved, and all in tears under his sermon. His doctrine was that of the French protestants, which, at that time, was moderate calvinism. He approved of the discipline of his own churches, which was presbyterian. He was an admirable scholar, and, which were his highest encomiums, he had an unconquerable aversion to sin, a supreme love to God and to the souls of men, and a holy unblemished life. Certainly he had some faults; but, as I have never heard of any, I can publish none.

During his stay in England, he married a Miss Catherine Boyton, by whom he had a son, named Philip, who survived him; but whether he had any more children I know not. Two years after his marriage he returned to Holland, where he had a mind to settle; but the pastoral offices be-

ing all full, and meeting with no prospect of a settlement, though his preaching was received with universal applause, he was preparing to return to England, when a chaplainship to some of the nobility at the Hague, with a stipend, was offered to him. This situation exactly suited his wishes, and he accepted the place.

The Hague, it is said, is the finest village in Europe. It is the residence of the States General, of ambassadors and envoys from other courts, of a great number of nobility and gentry, and of a multitude of French refugees. The Princes of Orange have a spacious palace here, and the chapel of the palace was given to the refugees for a place of public worship, and, it being too small to contain them, it was enlarged by above half. This French church called him to be one of their pastors. He accepted the call, and continued in his office till his death. He was constantly attended by a very crowded and brilliant audience, was heard with the utmost attention and pleasure, and, what few ministers can say, the effects of his ministerial labours were seen in the holy lives of great numbers of his people.

When the Princess of Wales, afterward Queen Caroline, passed through Holland in her way to England, Mr. Saurin had the honour of paying his respects to that illustrious lady. Her royal highness was pleased to single him out from the rest of the clergy, who were present, and to say to him, *do not imagine that, being dazzled with the glory which this revolution seems to promise me, I have*

lost sight of that God, from whom it proceeds. He hath been pleased to distinguish it with so many extraordinary marks, that I cannot mistake his divine hand; and, as I consider this long train of favours as immediately coming from him, to him alone I consecrate them. It is not astonishing, that Saurin speaks of this condescension with rapture. They are the kind and christian actions of the governors of a free people, and not the haughty airs of a French tyrant, insulting his slaves, that attach and inflame the hearts of mankind. The history of this illustrious christian queen is not written in blood, and therefore it is always read with tears of grateful joy.

Her royal highness was so well satisfied of Mr. Saurin's merit, that soon after her arrival in England she ordered Dr. Boulter, who was preceptor to Prince Frederick, the father of his present majesty, to write to Saurin, to draw up a treatise on the education of princes. Saurin immediately obeyed the order, and prefixed a dedication to the young princes. The book was never printed: but as it obtained the approbation of the Princess of Wales, who was an incomparable judge, we may conclude that it was excellent in its kind. This was followed by a handsome present from the princess to the author.

His most considerable work was intitled, *Discourses, historical, critical and moral, on the most memorable events of the old and new testament.* This work was undertaken by the desire of a Dutch merchant, who expended an immense sum

in the engraving of a multitude of copper-plates, which adorn the work. It consists of six folio volumes. Mr. Saurin died before the third was finished; but Mr. Roques finished the third, and added a fourth on the old testament; and Mr. de Beausobre subjoined two on the new testament. The whole is replete with very extensive learning, and well worth the careful perusal of students in divinity. The first of these was translated into English by Chamberlayne, soon after its first publication in French.

Our author's *dissertation on the expedience of sometimes disguising the truth*, raised a furious clamour against him. He does not decide the question; but he seems to take the affirmative. This produced a paper war, and his antagonists unjustly censured his morals. The mildness of his disposition rendered him a desirable opponent, for though he was sure to conquer, yet he subdued his adversary so handsomely, that the captive was the better for his defeat. But others did not controvert with so much temper. Some wrote against him, others for him. At length the synod decided the dispute in his favour.

He published a small, but valuable piece *on the state of christianity in France.* It treats of many important points of religion, in controversy between catholics and protestants. There is also a small *catechism* of his publishing, which I think worth the attention of such as educate children in the first principles of religion.

There are twelve volumes of his sermons. Some are dedicated to his Majesty George II. and the king was pleased to allow him a handsome pension. Some to her Majesty Queen Caroline, while she was Princess of Wales. One to Count Wassanaer, a Dutch nobleman. Two were dedicated to her Majesty, after his decease, by his son. Professor Dumont, and Mr. Husson, to whom Mr. Saurin left his manuscripts, published the rest, and one volume is dedicated to the Countess Dowager of Albemarle. The English seem therefore to have a right to the labours of this great man.

Mr. Saurin died at the Hague on Dec. 30th. 1730, aged 53, most sincerely regretted by all his acquaintance, as well as by his church, who lost in him a truly primitive christian minister, who spent his life in watching over his flock, as one who knew he must give an account.

In regard to this translation, it was first undertaken by the desire of a small circle of private friends, for our mutual edification. If I have suffered my private opinion to be prevailed over by others to print this translation, it is not because I think myself able to give language to Saurin; but because I humbly hope that the sentiments of the author may be conveyed to the reader by it. His sentiments, I think, are, in general, those of the holy scripture, and his manner of treating them well adapted to impress them on the heart. I have endeavoured not to disguise his meaning, though I have not been able to adopt his style; for which defect, though I print them by private subscripti-

on, for the use of my friends, on whose candour I depend, yet I do not offer to publish them to the world for the language of Mr. Saurin. I should have been glad to have pleased every subscriber, by inserting those sermons, which were most agreeable to him, had I known which they were: but as this was impossible, I have followed my own judgment, or perhaps exposed my want of it. The first volume aims to secure the doctrine of a *God*, against the attacks of atheists. In the second we mean to plead for the holy *scriptures* against deists. In the third, we intend to take those sermons, which treat of the *doctrines of christianity*, as we humbly conceive that the new testament is something more than a system of moral philosophy. And the last volume we dedicate to *moral* subjects, because we think christianity a holy religion, productive of moral obedience in all its true disciples. To the second edition a *fifth* volume is added on miscellaneous subjects. May the God of all grace bless the reading of them to the weakening of the dominion of sin, and to the advancement of the kingdom of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ!

REMARKS

ON

DEISM.

The Preface to the Second Volume of a Translation of

SAURIN'S SERMONS.

[THE THIRD EDITION ; PRINTED 1800.]

REMARKS, &c.

THAT spirit of inquiry, which produced the reformation, operated in France, as in all other countries; and gave being to an endless variety of different sentiments of religion. All the reformers, however, agreed in one grand article; that is, in substituting the authority of the holy scriptures in the place of the infallibility of the bishop of Rome.

The elevation of an obscure book, (for such, to the shame of popery, the bible had been,) to the dignity of a supreme judge, whose decisions were final, and from which there lay no appeal, naturally excited the attention of some who were capable, and of many who thought themselves so, to examine the authenticity of so extraordinary a book. At the reformation, the infallibility of the pope was the popular enquiry; and after it, the infallibility of Jesus Christ came under consideration. Curiosity and conscience concurred to search; and several circumstances justified the inquiry.

Many spurious books had been propagated in the world; the Jewish nation, and the Romish

church, paid as much regard to tradition as to the holy scriptures; protestants derived different, and even contrary doctrines from the same scriptures; the authenticity of some books of both testaments had never been universally acknowledged; and the points in litigation were of the last importance. These considerations excited the industry of a multitude of critics. One examined the chronology of the bible, another the geography of it, a third its natural philosophy, a fourth its history; one tried its purity by the rules of grammar; another measured its style by the laws of rhetoric; and a most severe scrutiny the book underwent.

Nothing came to pass in this enquiry but what might have been expected. Some defended the book by solid, and some by silly arguments; while others reprobated it, as void of any rational proof at all. There are certain pre-requisites essential to the investigation of truth, and it is hardly credible that all who examined, or who pretended to examine, the divinity of the christian canon, possessed them.

No sooner had Charles IX. published the first edict of pacification in France, in 1562, than there appeared at Lyons, along with many other sects, a party who called themselves DEISTS. The edict provided, that no person should be prosecuted on account of matters of conscience, and this sect claimed the benefit of it.

Deists differ so much from one another, that it is hard to define the term *deism*, and to say precisely what the word stands for. Dr. Clarke takes

the denomination in the most extensive signification, and distinguishes deists into *four* sorts.

" The *first* class believe the *existence* of a Su-
" preme Being, who made the world; but who does
" not at all concern himself in the management
" of it.

" The *second* consists of those, who believe not
" only the being, but also the *providence* of God
" with respect to the *natural* world; but who, not
" allowing any difference between moral good and
" evil, deny that God takes any notice of the mo-
" rally good or evil actions of men; these things
" depending, as they imagine, on the arbitrary con-
" stitutions of human laws.

" The *third* sort, having right apprehensions
" concerning the natural attributes of God, and
" his all-governing providence, and some notion
" of his *moral perfections* also, yet being prejudi-
" ced against the notion of the immortality of the
" human soul, believe that men perish entirely at
" death, and that one generation shall perpetually
" succeed another, without any future restoration,
" or renovation of things.

" The *fourth* consists of those, who believe the
" existence of a Supreme Being, together with his
" providence in the government of the world, as
" also the obligations of *natural religion;* but so
" far only, as these things are discoverable by the
" light of *nature* alone, without believing any di-
" vine revelation. These last are the only true
" deists."

The rise of the deists, along with that of other sects and parties among the reformed churches, seemed to confirm one argument of the Roman catholics against the reformation. When the reformers had pleaded for the sufficiency of revelation, and for the private right of judging of its meaning, the divines of the church of Rome had always replied, that unanimity in the faith is the test of the true church of Christ; that the church of Rome had always enjoyed such an unity; that the allowance of liberty of conscience would produce innumerable opinions; that people of the same sentiments would associate for the support and propagation of their pretended faith; and that, consequently, religious parties would counteract one another, to the entire subversion of christianity itself. Hence they inferred the absurdity of that principle, on which protestantism stood, and the absolute necessity of a living infallible judge of religious truths. The event abovementioned seemed to confirm this reasoning.

When these ideas entered the mind of a man of fruitful genius in the church of Rome, they operated in the most eccentric manner imaginable. A popular orator, or, who did ten times more mischief, a court chaplain, would collect a few real improprieties among protestants, subjoin a thousand more irregularities of his own invention, mere creatures of his superstitious fancy, paint them in colours the most frightful, exhibit them to public view under images the most tragical, ascribe them all to that horrid monster the right of

private judgment, and by these means endeavour to establish the old system, that destroyed men's lives, on the ruins of that new one, which benevolently proposed to save them.

The weaker protestants were intimidated by this vile bombast, and the wiser, who had been educated papists, that is to say, whose tender minds had been perverted with a bad philosophy, and a worse divinity, were hard pressed with this idle argument. The famous Peter Viret, who was pastor of the reformed church at Lyons, at this first appearance of the deists, not only wrote against them; but, we are sorry to say, he did more, he joined with the archbishop's vicar in persecuting them. What a motley figure? The voice of Jacob, and the hands of Esau!

Some of the more candid protestants contented themselves with making two observations, which they thought, were sufficient to answer the objections of Rome on this article. First, they said, it is not true that there are no religious controversies in the church of Rome; there are two hundred and thirty-seven contrarieties of doctrine among the Romish divines. Secondly, if it were true, the quiet of the members of that church would not prove their unity in the faith. A negative unanimity, that is, a freedom from religious differences, may proceed from ignorance, negligence, or fear: the two first resemble the quiet of night, when all are asleep, or the stillness of a church-yard, where all are dead; and the last is the taciturnity of a slave under a tyrant's rod.

These observations were not impertinent; for although none of our disputes are managed without humbling marks of human infirmity, yet on a cool balance of accounts, it will appear, that the moral good produced by liberty of conscience is far greater than the moral evil suffered. Peevish tempers and puerile mistakes, mix with free inquiry; but without inquiry, fair and free, we should have no religion at all.

Had the protestants done only that with the writings of Moses and Paul, which they did with the writings of Homer and Tacitus; had they fetched them out of dusty holes in the libraries, exposed them to public view, and left them to shift for themselves, their authenticity, we presume, would have shined with inimitable lustre; for fewer objections have lain against the book, than against the methods, that have been used to enforce it. But that fatal notion of uniformity; this absurd dogma, unity in the faith is the test of a true church; misled those worthy men, and they adopted the spirit of persecution, that child of *the mother of abominations*, whom folly had produced, and whom cruelty had hitherto maintained.

In order to vie with the church of Rome in point of uniformity, and to excel it in point of truth, the reformers extracted, what they supposed, the sense of scripture; not on plain, obvious, essential truths; but on doctrines extremely perplexed, and difficult; these extracts they called confessions of faith, these they signed, and all, who refused to sign them, they disowned, and

persecuted out of their communities. Having done these things, not *according to the pattern shewed* by their divine Master in his plain and peaceful sermon on *the mount* of Olives, but according to the *arcana imperii* of *the woman, who sitteth on seven mountains, and who reigneth over the kings of the earth,* they boasted of enjoying as good an uniformity as that of which the catholic church vaunted.

If they, who first prosecuted these unrighteous measures in the protestant churches, could have foreseen the dismal consequences of them, surely they must have lain in sackcloth and ashes to lament their antichristian zeal, which, by importing exotics from Rome, by planting them in reformed churches, and by flattering the magistracy into the dirty work of cultivating them, spoiled the growth of reason and religion, and cherished, under their deleterious shade, nothing but that unprofitable weed, implicit faith.

Let a dispassionate spectator cast his eye on the christian world, and, when he has seen the rigorous measures, that have been used to *establish*, as it is called, the *faith* of the reformers, let him turn his eye to the church of Rome, on the one hand, and to sectaries, on the other, and attend to the consequences of these measures among both. Catholics laugh at protestant arguments against the infallibility of the bishops of Rome. See, say they, *mutant clypeos*, the reformed have destroyed one pope to create an hundred. Calvin is infallible at Geneva, Luther in

Germany, in England Cranmer, and in Scotland Knox! How wise the doctrine of infallibility! how just and necesary the practice of the inquisition! The pretended protestants have tried in vain to govern churches without severity; they theirselves, who have exclaimed the most violently against it, have been obliged to adopt it. Sectaries, on the other hand, avail themselves of these practices, and, not distinguishing between christianity itself and the professors of it, charge that on the laws of our prince, which is chargeable only on the inadvertency of his subjects.

Other times, other manners! Whether the reproaches of the papists, the increase of learning, piety, and experience, or whatever else have meliorated the reformed churches, the French protestants rarely persecute, and when they do, it is plain, they do that as a body in a synod, which not one of them would dare to avow as a private divine. Dangerous distinction! Should an upright man vote for a measure, which he would blush to enforce? Should he not endeavour to abrogate canons, which, for the soul of him, he has not impiety enough to execute? Shall protestants renounce that *merchandise* of Rome, which consists of *odours, and ointments, and chariots, and purple, and silk, and scarlet,* and continue that more scandalous traffic, which consists of *slaves, and souls of men?*

If a counsel, or a work, be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, is one of the surest axioms in the world; and, if there be such a thing in the world

as dignity, that is, propriety, of character, it must be in that christian, who, disdaining every carnal weapon, maintains the truth of his religion by placid reasoning, and by a holy life. Other influence is unscriptural, and unnatural too. We may admire the genius of a deist, avail ourselves of his learning, and lament his abuse of both; but we may not touch his person, his property, his liberty, his character, his peace. *To his own master he standeth or falleth.*

We beg leave to subjoin three observations in regard to deism. Deists are not so numerous as some have imagined. Real christians have occasioned violent prejudices against christianity. Very few deists have taken up the argument on its true grounds; and they, who have, could not support it.

Deists are not so numerous as some have imagined. Monsieur Voltaire has thought proper to inform his countrymen, in his *Additions* to his *General History*, that "Deism which Charles II. "seemed openly to profess, became the reigning "religion" in England: that "the sect is become "very numerous:" and that "a number of emi- "nent writers have made open profession of "deism." How this agreeable French writer came to know this, who can tell, if, as he affirms a little lower, "Deists allow a diversity of opi- "nions in others, and seldom discover their own;" and, if "deists have only a private form of wor- "ship, each worshiping God in his own house, "and assisting without scruple at all public cere-

" monies ?" Surely Mons. Voltaire mistook; he meant to describe a hypocrite, and not a deist.

If a deist be one, who, having examined the religion of nature, and the religion of scripture, gives the preference to the former, and rejects the latter, it may be affirmed, I think, that the number of deists is very small. In a comparative view, the number is too inconsiderable to be mentioned. The rank of a Herbert, the wit of of a Shaftesbury, the style of a Bolingbroke, the scurrilous buffoonery of a Woolston; along with the wisdom and piety of the Lockes, and Lelands, and Lardners, who have opposed them, have given a name to deism : but the number of its professors is trifling, and of no account. If Monsieur Voltaire meant to relate an historical fact, he ought to have enumerated the *numerous professors* of christianity, and the *eminent writers* in defence of it, and then the numerous professors of deism would have diminished and disappeared. If he meant to give a sanction to deism on account of its numerous defenders, he is a fresh example of that weakness, to which great philosophers are sometimes subject, the weakness of sacrificing a sound logic to a silly prejudice.

Two sorts of people are fond of multiplying deists; bigots, and deists themselves. Deists take the liberty of associating with themselves, Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, and all the ancient philosophers. They first suppose that these philosophers would have rejected revelation, had it been proposed to them, and then they speak of them

as if they had actually rejected it. But, if the gospel be not a system of absurdity, adapted to credulity, the probability is greater that they would have received, than that they would have rejected it; and if, as Lord Bolingbroke says, "it must be admitted, that Plato insinuates in "many places the want, or the necessity of a "divine revelation, to discover the external ser- "vice God requires, and the expiation for sin, "and to give stronger assurances of the rewards "and punishments, that await men in another "world;" it becomes highly probable, that Plato would have embraced the christian revelation; and were the testimony of Jesus Christ admissable, it is absolutely certain that, *if the mighty works, which were done* in Judea, *had been done* among the heathens, many heathens *would have repented* of paganism *in sackcloth and ashes.* To the army of philosophers they add all those christians, who do not understand, or who do not practise, the dictates of christianity. With this hypothetical reasoning they attack christianity, and boast of numbers, while all their votaries are *so few that a child may write them. Bigots,* who make scripture, and their sense of it, the same thing, practise the same pious fraud, and turn over all those to the deistical party, who do not allow their doctrines. Hence the popular notion of the multiplicity of deists.

From the charge of deism, first, the *populace* ought to be freed. Too many of them live without any religion. The religion of nature is as un-

known to them as the religion of scripture. When they think of religion, their error is credulity, and their spiritual guides soon find, that the believing of too much, and not the believing of too little, is their mistake. They are wicked; but they are not deists; for the term deism, surely, stands for admitting the religion of nature, as well as for the renouncing of revelation. But of both, in general, they are alike ignorant.

They, who renounce popular doctrines, are not therefore deists. The learned and pious Dr. Bekker, one of the pastors at Amsterdam, renounced the popular opinion of the power of the devil, and published a book against it. He seemed to doubt also of the eternity of hell torments. He was reputed a deist, and the consistory, the classes, and the synods proceeded against him, suspended him first from the communion, and deposed him at last from the office of a minister. Yet Dr. Bekker was a fast friend of revelation, and all his crime lay in expounding some literal passages of revelation allegorically. Not the book, but the received meaning of it he denied.

The deists ought not to claim *them, who affirm, that it is not the property of the truths of revelation to square with philosophy.* Mons. Voltaire takes Pomponatius for a deist. Pomponatius denied the *natural* immortality of the soul; he affirmed, that it could not be proved by principles of philosophy; but he believed, and maintained, the immortality of the soul on the testimony of revelation. This learned Italian philo-

sopher was persecuted by the monks; his book, it is said, was burnt by the Venetians; and the modern deists have adopted him: yet Pomponatius was a believer of revelation, and, by believing the immortality of the soul on the testimony of scripture, he discovered the most profound veneration for it, a deference exactly similar to that, which trinitarians pay to its testimony concerning the nature of God.

What Pomponatius affirmed of the immortality of the soul, Bayle affirmed of *all the mysteries* of the gospel: but, we do not allow that Bayle was therefore a deist. Thus he writes: "If one of "the apostles, St. Paul for instance, when among "the Athenians, had besought the Areopagus to "permit him to enter the lists against all philoso- "phers; had he offered to maintain a disputation "upon the three persons, who are but one God; "and if, before he began the disputation, he had "acknowledged the truth of the rules laid down by "Aristotle in his logic, whether with regard to the "terms of opposition, or the characteristics of the "premises of a demonstrative syllogism, &c. Last- "ly, if, after these preliminaries were well settled, "he had answered, that our reason is too weak to "ascend to the knowledge of the mysteries, in op- "position to which objections were proposed to "him; in such a case, he would have suffered as "much shame, as it is possible for a defeated op- "ponent to meet with. The Athenian philosophers "must have gained a complete victory; for he would "have been judged and condemned agreeably to

"the maxims, the truth of which he had ac-
"knowledged before. But had the philosophers
"employed those maxims in attacking him, after
"he had informed them of the foundation of his
"faith, he might have opposed the following bar-
"rier to them: that his doctrines were not within
"the cognizance of reason; that they had been re-
"vealed by heaven; and that mankind must be-
"lieve them, though they could not comprehend
"them. The disputation, in order for its being
"carried on in a regular manner, must not have
"turned upon the following question, whether
"these doctrines were repugnant to the rules of
"logic and metaphysics; but on the question, whe-
"ther they had been revealed by heaven. It would
"have been impossible for St. Paul to have been
"defeated, except it could have been proved to
"him, that God did not require those things to
"be believed."* This reasoning does not appear to favour deism; it seems to place *the mysteries* of christianity on their true base.

Neither are *those* to be reputed deists, *who doubt or deny, the inspiration of some books, which are usually accounted sacred.* Luther denied the inspiration of the epistle of St. James; Grotius that of the Song of Solomon; and Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, denied that the Apocalypse was written by the Apostle John; yet no one of these was a deist.

* Gen, Dict. vol. x. Illustration upon the Manichees.

Nor ought the deists to claim those learned *critics*, who allow that the scriptures have undergone the fate of all other books, and who therefore expose and amend the errors of copyists; expunge interpolations; restore mutilated passages; and deal with the writings of St. Paul, as they do with the writings of Thucydides. The chronology, the geography, the history, the learning of the bible, (if the expression be not improper) must necessarily submit to a critical investigation, and upright critics have self evident rules of trial. The most severe piece of criticism on revelation is at the same time one of the most excellent defences of it. One single rule, had it been thought worthy of that attention, which it merits, would have spared the writing of many a folio, and have freed some christians from many a religious reverie.* Yet the author of this piece of criticism, the great Le Clerc, has been by some of his bigotted countrymen accounted a deist.

Finally: we cannot resign *those* brightest ornaments of the christian church, whose sense and grace will not allow them to be dogmatical, and *who hesitate about some doctrines generally received by their own communities.* The celebrated Philip Melancthon has been taxed with scepticism:

* Mons. Le Clerc expresses this rule thus; *Multa videri in versionibus emphatica, quæ in ipsis fontibus nullam emphasin habent.* Ars Crit. tom. i. p. 2. s. i. c. 4. This rule of interpretation, which regards the *idiom* of a language, deserves more attention, it should seem, than hath been usually paid to it.

but far be the imputation from him! "He was "one of the wisest and best men of his age, (says "a certain historian) he was of a sweet peaceful "disposition, had a great deal of wit, had read "much, and his knowledge was very extensive. "The combination of such qualities, natural and "acquired' is ordinarily a foundation for diffidence. "Melancthon was by no means free from doubts, "and there were abundance of subjects, upon "which he durst not pronounce *this is so, and it* "*cannot be otherwise.* He lived among a sect of "people, who to him appeared passionate, and "too eager to mix the arts of human policy, and "the authority of the secular arm, with the affairs "of the church. His tender conscience made "him afraid that this might be a mark of repro-"bation. Although he drew up the Augsburg "confession, yet he hated disputes in religion, "and when his mother asked him how she should "conduct her belief amidst so many controversies, "continue, answered he, to believe and pray as "you have hitherto done, and let these wars of "controversy give you no manner of trouble." This is the Melancthon who was suspected of deism!

Several more classes might be added to these; but these are sufficient to prove that real deists are not by far so numerous as reputed ones. The cause of deism, unsupported by reason, may magnify its little all; but the cause of revelation has little to fear from the learning, less from the morality, and nothing from the number of its opponents.

When some athiests appeared in the Jewish church, and attacked the knowledge and worship of God, the people of God were intimidated; but, the royal Psalmist justly observes, *they were in great fear, where no fear was.* Similar events have produced similar fears in the christian church; and to these honest but ignorant fears, we ascribe the much greater part of those pious frauds, with which christians have disgraced the cause of God. Most of the fathers, most of the church of Rome, and some protestant churches, have treated christianity like an old crazy palace, which requires props or supporters on every side; and they have manifested great injudiciousness in the choice of supporters. The gospel stands like a stately, sturdy oak, defying the attack of every storm; but they, who had pitched their tent beneath its shade, heard a rustling among the leaves, trembled for the fate of the tree, and to secure it, surrounded it with a plantation of oziers. To this ignorant timidity, and not to the base tricks of knavery, the sordid arts of a sorry avarice, or the barbarous pleasure of shedding human blood, we charitably attribute the greatest absurdities in the christian church.

These absurdities, however, have produced very bad effects, and they oblige us to own, that *real christians have occasioned violent prejudices against christianity.*

Some christians have endeavoured to support the cause of christianity by spurious books; some

by juggling tricks, called miracles; some by the imposition of superstitious ceremonies; some by the propagation of absurd doctrines; some have pretended to explain it by a wretched philosophy; others have exposed it to derision under pretence of adorning it with allegory; some have pleaded for it by fines, and fires, and swords; others have incorporated it with civil interests; most have laid down false canons of interpretation, and have resembled that synod, which condemned the afore-mentioned Dr. Bekker, because he "*had explained the holy* "*scriptures so as to make them contrary to the* "CATECHISM, *and particularly to* THE ARTICLES "OF FAITH, *which he had himself subscribed.*" Above all, the loose lives of the professors of christianity, and particularly of some of the ministers of it, have *covered the daughter of Sion with a cloud, and have cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel.*

Involve christianity in all these thick mists, surround it with all these phœnomena, call a weak eye, or a wicked heart, to contemplate it, and, without a spirit of prophecy, the discovery may be foretold: the observer will become a reasoner . . . a philosopher . . . a DEIST.

These are the topics, and not the gospel itself, which most deists have attacked: but if we agree to exonerate christianity of all these incumbrances, what have deists to answer? *Very few* of them *have taken up the argument on its true grounds, and they who have, could not support it.*

When a Frenchman undertakes to attack christianity, the disputes of his countrymen afford him an ample supply; he borrows arms of every party of christians; he conquers popery with protestant weapons, opposes the visions of quietism with the subtleties of Jansenism, the mysteries of Jansenius with the laws of good sense, and having defeated absurdity, he vainly imagines he has obtained a victory over christianity. English deists have taken the same method; and, as our country has the same excesses, they have an ample field of glory before them. Christianity has nothing to do with the errors of St. Austin, or the dreams of Madame Bourignon; but it is founded on a few facts, the evidence of which can never be disproved. The knowledge of these is a preservative against deism.

To establish these facts was the original design of Mons. Saurin in the following Sermons, as it is mine in endeavouring to translate them. Those, who are acquainted with his sermons, well know, that there are in the twelve volumes many more on the same topics: but, as it was impossible to put them all into one volume, I have been obliged to make the best choice in my power, and have arranged them in the following order.

The first sermon contains a set of rules essentially necessary to the investigating of *truth*, and a few reasons to enforce the practice of them. The second proposeth an examination of *the truths of christianity*, and settles rules of disputation peculiar to this controversy. The *facts* follow in the succeed-

ing sermons; the birth, the ministry, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, &c. Four of the last discourses *expose infidelity* and *recommend christianity;* and the last of all is *an exhortation* to him, who is supposed to have found the gospel of Christ *to hold it fast*, as a system of truth, and to avoid those snares, into which christians are liable to be drawn.

May our readers *have these things always in remembrance; for we have not followed cunningly devised fables:* &c. but a *sure word of prophecy*, history, and precept, which *holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

REFLECTIONS

ON

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY,

CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS OF RELIGION,

AND

TOLERATION.

The Preface to the Third Volume of a Translation of

SAURIN'S SERMONS.

[THE THIRD EDITION, PUBLISHED 1800.]

REFLECTIONS, &c.

THREE times have I taken pen in hand to account to my subscribers in a preface for my choice of the sermons that compose this volume; but one thought hath as often confused me at the outset, and obliged me to lay it aside. I am struck with an idea of the different degrees of labour necessary to two men, one of whom should conceive the project of disuniting christians, and the other that of cementing them together in mutual love. The first need not trouble himself with study, examination, and argument; he would not be obliged either to divest himself of his own prepossessions, or to expose those of others; he need not sit whole nights and days either to examine coolly his own thesis, or impartially to weigh those of his opponents; let him only take popular prejudices, cover them with the sacred style of scripture, or conceal them under the impenetrable jargon of the schools; let him animate them with party spirit, call it religious zeal, and denounce judgments on all, who do not believe the whole to be

essential to salvation, and the work will be done. Such a man, methinks, resembles a light heeled enemy tripping over a spacious field, and scattering as he goes the seeds of an endless number of weeds; while the man, who adopts a contrary plan, must be forced, like the patient, prying weeder, to stoop and to toil step by step, day after day, feeling many a pain, and fetching many a sigh, to pull the noxious produce up.

According to my first proposal, this volume ought to consist of sermons on *the doctrines of christianity*. My intimate friends, who first encouraged, and subscribed for this translation, thoroughly understood me; but I might have foreseen, that their partiality would procure other purchasers, unacquainted with my notions of men and things, and who might probably expect to find each his own system of religion, in a volume of sermons on the doctrines of our common Lord. I am necessitated therefore to explain myself, and to bespeak a candid attention, while I endeavour to do so.

Very early in life I was prepossessed in favour of the following positions:—Christianity is a religion of divine original—a religion of divine original must needs be a perfect religion, and answer all the ends, for which it was revealed, without human additions.—The christian religion hath undergone considerable alterations since the times of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, and yet, *Jesus* Christ was then accounted *the finisher*, as well as *the author of faith*.—The doctrines of revelation,

as they lie in the inspired writings, differ very much from the same doctrines, as they lie in creeds of human composition.—The moral precepts, the positive institutes, and the religious affections, which constitute the devotion of most modern christians, form a melancholy contrast to those, which are described by the guides, whom they profess to follow.—The light of nature, and that of revelation; the operations of right reason; the spirit of the first, and the influence of the Holy Ghost, the soul of the last; both proceeding from the same uniform Supreme Being, cannot be supposed to be destructive of each other, or, even in the least degree, to clash together.—The finest idea, that can be formed of the Supreme Being, is that of an infinite intelligence always in harmony with itself; and, accordingly, the best way of proving the truth of revelation is that of shewing the analogy of the plan of redemption to that of creation and providence. Simplicity and majesty characterize both nature and scripture: simplicity reduces those benefits, which are essential to the real happiness of man, to the size of all mankind; majesty makes a rich provision for the employment and super-added felicity of a few superior geniuses, who first improve themselves, and then felicitate their inferior brethren, by simplifying their own ideas, by refining and elevating those of their fellow-creatures, by so establishing a social intercourse, consolidating fraternal love, and along with it all the reciprocal ties, that unite mankind. —Men's ideas of objects essential to their happi-

ness are neither so dissimilar, nor so numerous, as inattentive spectators are apt to suppose.—Variety of sentiment, which is the life of society, cannot be destructive of real religion.—Mere mental errors, if they be not intirely innocent in the account of the supreme Governor of mankind, cannot be, however, objects of blame and punishment among men.—Christianity could never be intended to destroy the just natural rights, or even to diminish the natural privileges of mankind.—That religion, which allows the just claims, and secures the social happiness of all mankind, must needs be a better religion than that, which provides for only a part at the expence of the rest.—God is more glorified by the good actions of his creatures, expressive of homage to him, and productive of universal, social good, than he is by uncertain conjectures, or even accurate notions, which originate in self-possession, and terminate in social disunion.—How clear soever all these maxims may be, a certain degree of ambition or avarice, ignorance or malice, presumption or diffidence, or any other irregular passion, will render a man blind to the clearest demonstration, and insensible to the most rational and affecting persuasion.—These positions, mere opinions and prepossessions before examination, became demonstrative truths after a course of diligent search; and these general principles have operated in the choice of the sermons, which compose this volume of the principal doctrines of christianity.

But, previous to all inquiries concerning the doctrines of christianity, it is absolutely necessary to establish that of CHRISTIAN LIBERTY : for, say we what we will, if this preliminary doctrine of right be disallowed, voluntary piety is the dream of an enthusiast ; the oracles of God in the christian world, like those of the Sybils in pagan Rome, are sounds convertible to senatorial sense ; and the whole christian mission, from the first prophet down to the last minister, is one long muster-roll of statesmen's tools, a disgrace to their species, a contradiction to their profession, a dishonour to their God !

Christian liberty in Italy is liberty to be a Roman catholic, that is, liberty to believe what the bishop of Rome affirms to be true, and liberty to perform what he commands to be done. Christian liberty in some reformed churches is liberty to renounce what the reformers renounced, to believe what they affirmed, and to practise what they required. But we, who *have not so learned Christ*, define christian liberty otherwise ; and, if we be asked,— What is christian liberty ? we answer, it is liberty to be a christian. One part of christianity consists of propositions to be believed. Liberty to be a christian believer is liberty to examine these propositions, to form a judgment of them, and to come to a self-determination, according to our own best abilities. Another part of christianity consists of duties to be performed. Liberty to be a practical christian is liberty to perform these duties, either as they regard God, our neighbour, or our-

selves. Liberty to be a christian implies liberty not to be a christian, as liberty to examine a proposition implies liberty to reject the arguments brought to support it, if they appear inconclusive, as well as liberty to admit them, if they appear demonstrative. To pretend to examine christianity, before we have established our right to do so, is to pretend to cultivate an estate, before we have made out our title to it.

The object of christian liberty, that, with which a man, who would examine christianity, has to do, is a system of christian doctrine: but, having established the doctrine of right, before we proceed to exercise this right by examining the religion proposed to mankind by Jesus Christ, it is absolutely necessary to inquire what we ought, on sound principles of just and fair reasoning, to expect to find in it. I know some truths without revelation. I have a full demonstration in nature that there is one God—that it is impossible there should be more than one—that he is an intelligent Spirit—and that he is a wise and bountiful Being. Should any religion, which pretends to be divine, affirm, there is a plurality of gods—God is not an intelligent Spirit—God is an unwise and an unkind being—I should have a right to reject this pretended revelation. Indeed, should a revealed religion allow my demonstrations, and afterwards explain them in a manner quite subversive of my former explications of them; should it affirm, God is, as you say, a wise and bountiful being, but he displays his wisdom and goodness

not in governing his intelligent creatures as you have imagined; such a moral government I will prove to you, would shew a defect of wisdom and goodness: but he displays the supreme perfection of both by providing for such and such interests, and by bestowing such and such benefits, as have either escaped your notice, or were beyond your comprehension. In this case, I ought not to reject revelation, for, although I can demonstrate without inspiration the wisdom and goodness of God, yet I cannot pretend by the light of nature to know all the directions, and to ascertain all the limits of these perfections.

Lay christianity before me who will, I expect to find three things in it, which I call analogy, proportion, and perfection. Each of these articles opens a wide field of not incurious speculation, and each fully explained and applied would serve to guide any man in his choice of a religion, yea in his choice of a party among the various divisions of christians: but alas! we are not employed now-a-days in examining and choosing religious principles for ourselves, but in subscribing, and defending those of our ancestors! A few hints then shall serve.

By *analogy* I mean resemblance, and, when I say a revealed religion must bring along with it analogical evidence, I mean, it must resemble the just dictates of nature. The reason is plain. The same Supreme Being is the author of both. The God of nature has formed man for observing objects, comparing them together. laying down

principles, inferring consequences, reasoning and self-determining: he has not only empowered all mankind to exercise these abilities, but he has even constrained them by a necessity of nature to do so: he has not only rendered it impossible for men to excel without this exercise, but he has even rendered it impossible for them to exist safely in society without it. In a word, the God of nature has made man in his own image, a self-determining being, and, to say nothing of the nature of virtue, he has rendered free consent essential to every man's felicity and peace. With his own consent subjection makes him happy; without it dominion over the universe would make him miserable.

The religion of nature, (I mean by this expression, here, the objects, which display the nature of the Deity, and thereby discover the obligations of mankind,) is in perfect harmony with the natural constitution of man. All natural objects offer evidence to all; but force it on none. A man may examine it, and he may not examine it: he may admit it, and he may reject it: and, if his rejection of the evidence of natural religion be not expressed in such overt acts as are injurious to the peace of civil society, no man is empowered to force him, or to punish him; the supreme moral Govenor of the world himself does not distinguish him here by any exterior punishments; at most he expresses his displeasure by marks attached to the person of the culprit, and concealed from all the rest of his fellow creatures; and

the glory of civil society is not to encroach on the moral government of God.

Christianity comes, pretends to come from the God of nature; I look for analogy, and I find it; but I find it in the holy scriptures, the first teachers, and the primitive churches.

In all these, I am considered as a rational creature, objects are proposed, evidence is offered: if I admit it, I am not entitled thereby to any temporal emoluments; if I refuse it, I am not subjected to any temporal punishments: the whole is an affair of conscience, and lies between each individual and his God. I choose to be a christian on this very account. This freedom, which I call a perfection of my nature; this self-determination, the dignity of my species, the essence of my natural virtue, this I do not forfeit by becoming a christian; this I retain, explained, confirmed, directed, assisted by the regal grant of the Son of God. Thus the prerogatives of Christ, the laws of his religion, and the natural rights of mankind being analagous, evidence arises of the divinity of the religion of Jesus.

I believe, it would be very easy to prove, that the christianity of the church of Rome, and that of every other establishment, because they are establishments, are totally destitute of this analogy. The religion of nature is not capable of establishment; the religion of Jesus Christ is not capable of establishment: if the religion of any church be capable of establishment, it is not analogous to

that of Scripture, or that of nature. A very simple example may explain our meaning. Natural religion requires man to pay a mental homage to the Deity, to venerate his perfections, by adoring and confiding in them. By what possible means can these pious operations of the mind be established? Could they be forced, their nature would be destroyed, and they would cease to be piety, which is an exercise of judgment and will. Revealed religion requires man to pay a mental homage to the Deity through Jesus Christ; to venerate his perfections by adoring and confiding in them as christianity directs; by repentance, by faith, by hope, and so on. How is it possible to establish those spiritual acts? A human establishment requires man to pay this christian mental homage to the Deity by performing some external ceremony, suppose bowing to the east. The ceremony, we grant, may be established; but, the voluntary exercise of the soul in the performance, which is essential to the christianity of the action,—who in the world can establish this? If the religion of Jesus be considered as consisting of external rites and internal dispositions, the former may be established; but, be it remembered, the establishment of the exterior not only does not establish the interior, but the destruction of the last is previously essential to the establishment of the first.

No religion can be established without penal sanctions, and all penal sanctions in cases of religion are persecutions. Before a man can persecute, he must renounce the generous tolerant

dispositions of a christian. No religion can be established without human creeds; and subscription to all human creeds implies two dispositions contrary to true religion, and both expressly forbidden by the author of it. These two dispositions are, love of dominion over conscience in the imposer, and an abject preference of slavery in the subscriber. The first usurps the rights of Christ; the last swears allegiance to a pretender. The first domineers, and gives laws like a tyrant; the last truckles like a vassal. The first assumes a dominion incompatible with his frailty, impossible even to his dignity, yea denied to the dignity of angels; the last yields a low submission, inconsistent with his own dignity, and ruinous to that very religion, which he pretends by this mean to support. Jesus Christ does not require, he does not allow, yea he expressly forbids both these dispositions, well knowing, that an allowance of these would be a suppression of the finest dispositions of the human soul, and a degrading of revelation beneath the religion of nature. If human inventions have formerly secularised christianity, and rendered such bad dispositions necessary in times of ignorance, they ought to be exploded now, as all christians now allow this theory—The Son of God did not come to redeem one part of mankind to serve the secular views, and unworthy passions of the other; but he obtained freedom for both, that both *might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of their*

lives. When churches reduce this theory to practice, they realize in actual life, what otherwise makes only a fine idea decyphered in books, and by so doing they adorn their christianity with the glorious evidence of analogy.

Suppose the God of nature should think proper to reveal a simple system of astronomy, and to require all mankind to examine and believe this revelation on pain of his displeasure. Suppose one civil government, having examined this revelation, and explained the sense, in which they understood it, should endeavour to establish their explication by temporal rewards and punishments. Suppose they should require all their subjects to carry their infants in their arms to a public school, to answer certain astronomical interrogations, to be put by a professor of astronomy; as, in general,—Wilt thou, infant of eight days old! Wilt thou be an astronomer? Does thou renounce all erroneous systems of astronomy? In particular, dost thou admit the true Copernican system? Dost thou believe the revealed explication of this system? And dost thou also believe that explication of this revelation, which certain of our own predecessors in the profession believed, which explication the government has adopted, and which we your masters, and parents, in due obedience, receive? Suppose a proxy required to answer for this infant; all this, I, proxy for this child, do stedfastly believe; and suppose from this hour the child became a reputed astronomer. Suppose yet further, this child should grow to man-

hood, and in junior life should be pressed, on account of the obligation contracted in his infant state, to subscribe a certain paper called an astronomical creed, containing, mathematical definitions, astronomical propositions, and so on, and should be required for certain rewards to examine and approve, teach and defend this creed, and no other, without incurring the penalty of expulsion from all public schools, a deprivation of all honours, which he might be supposed on other accounts to merit,an exclusion from all offices of trust, credit, and profit,in some cases a loss of property, in others imprisonment, in others death. In this supposed case, I ask, would not the establishment of this system be an open violation of the doctrine of analogy, and should I not have a right to reason thus ?—The revelation itself is infallible, and the author of it has given it me to examine: but the establishment of *a given meaning* of it renders examination needless, and perhaps dangerous. The God of nature has given me eyes, instruments, powers, and inclinations to use them; eyes, faculties, and dispositions as good as those of my ancestors, and instruments better: but all these advantages, which may be beneficial to me, if they confirm the truth of the explication, may be fatal to me, if they lag behind, or ken beyond the bound of the creed. Nature says, a constellation is a collection of stars, which in the heavens appear near to one another. This is a plain simple truth, I open my eyes, and admit the evidence. Revelation says, each fixt star is a sun, the cen-

ter of a system, consisting of planets inhabited by intelligent beings, who possess one sense and two faculties more than the inhabitants of this globe, and who worship the most high God in spirit and in truth. I cannot comprehend this whole proposition; but there is nothing in it contrary to the nature of things; and I believe the truth of it on the testimony of the revealer. The established explication of this proposition is that of Ptolemy. He numbered the stars in the constellation Bootes, and found them, or supposed he found them, twenty-three, and this number I am to examine and approve, teach and defend against all opponents. What shall I say to Tycho, who affirms, Bootes contains only eighteen? Must I execrate Hevelius, who makes them fifty-two? After all, perhaps Flamstead may be right; he says there are fifty-four. Does not this method of teaching astronomy suppose an hundred absurdities? Does it not imply the imperfection of the revealed system, the infallibility of Ptolemy, the erroneousness of the other astronomers, the folly of examination, or the still greater madness of allowing a conclusion after a denial of the premises, from which it pretends to be drawn? When I was an infant, I am told, I was treated like a man; now I am a man, I am treated like an infant. I am an astronomer by proxy. The plan of God requires faculties, and the exercise of them; that of my country exchanges both for quiet submission. I am, and I am not, a believer of astronomy.

Were it affirmed, that a revelation from heaven established such a method of maintaining a science of speculation, reasoning, and practice, every rational creature would have a right to doubt the truth of such a revelation; for it would violate the doctrine of analogy, by making the Deity inconsistent with himself. But we will pursue this track no further; we hope nothing said will be deemed illiberal; we distinguish between a constitution of things, and many wise and good men, who submit to it; and we only venture to guess, if they be wise and good men under such inconveniences, they would be wiser and better men without them: at all adventures, if we owe much respect to men, we owe more to truth, to incontrovertible, unchangeable truth.

A second character of a divine revelation is *proportion*. By proportion I mean relative fitness; and, when I affirm, a divine revelation must bring along with it proportional evidence, I mean to say, it must appear to be exactly fitted to those intelligent creatures, for whose benefit it is intended. In the former article we required a *similarity* between the requisitions of God and the faculties of men; in this we require an exact *quantity* of requisition commensurate with those faculties. The former regards the nature of of a revelation; this has for its object the limits of it. Were it possible for God, having formed a man only for walking, by a messenger from heaven to require him to fly, the doctrine of analogy would be violated by this requisition; and were he to de-

termine a prodigious space, through which he required him to pass in a given time; were he to describe an immense distance, and to enjoin him to move through it with a degree of velocity impossible to him, the doctrine of proportion, would be violated; and the God of revelation would in both cases be made contradictory to the God of nature.

The christian revelation, we presume, answers all our just expectations on these articles; for all the truths revealed by it are analogous to the nature of things, and every article in it bears an exact proportion to the abilities of all those, for whose benefit it is given. Our Saviour treats of the doctrine of proportion in the parable of the talents, and supposes the Lord to apportion the number of talents, when he bestows them, and the rewards and punishments, which he distributes for the use, and abuse of them, to the *several ability* of each servant. St. Paul depicts the primitive church in all the beauty of this proportional economy; *the same God worketh all diversities of operations in all differences of administrations, dividing to every man severally as he will.* This economy, he says, assimilates the christian church to the human body, and gives to the one, as to the other, strength, symmetry, and beauty, evidently proving that the author of creation is the author of redemption, framing both by one uniform rule of analogy and proportion.

Full of these just notions, we examine that description of revelation, which human creeds exhibit, and we perceive at once, they are all destitute

of proportional evidence. They all consist of multifarious propositions, each of which is considered as essential to the whole, and the belief of all essential to an enjoyment of the benefits of christianity, yea to those of civil society, in this life, and to a participation of eternal life in the world to come. In this case the free gifts of God to all are monopolized by a few, and sold out to the many at a price, far greater than nine-tenths of them can pay, and at a price, which the remaining part ought not to pay, because the donor has not empowered these salesmen to exact any price, because by his original grant all are made joint proprietors, and because the payment would be at once a renunciation of their right to hold by the original grant, and of their Lord's prerogative to bestow.

What can a declaimer mean, when he repeats a number of propositions, and declares the belief of them all essential to the salvation of *man?* or what could he reply to one, who should ask him, which man do you mean, the man in the stall?—It is Sir Isaac Newton: or the man in the aile?—It is Tom Long the carrier. God Almighty, the Creator of both, has formed these two men with different organs of body, and different faculties of mind; he has given them different advantages and different opportunities of improving them; he has placed them in different relations, and empowered the one to teach what the other, depend on his belief what will, is not capable of learning. Ten thousand Tom Longs go to make

up one Newtonian soul. Is it credible, the God, who made these two men, who thoroughly knows them, who is the common parent, the just governor, and the kind benefactor of both, should require of men so different, equal belief and practice? Were such a thing supposeable, how unequal and disproportional, how inadequate and unlike himself must such a Deity be! To grasp the terraqueous globe with a human hand, to make a tulip-cup contain the ocean, to gather all the light of the universe into one human eye, to hide the sun in a snuff-box, are the mighty projects of children's fancies. Is it possible, requisitions similar to these should proceed from *the only wise God!*

There is, we have reason to believe, a certain portion of spirit, if I may be allowed to speak so, that constitutes a human soul; there are infinitely different degrees of capability imparted by the Creator to the souls of mankind; and there is a certain ratio by necessity of nature between each degree of intelligence and a given number of ideas, as there is between a cup capable of containing a given quantity, and a quantity of matter capable of being contained in it. In certain cases it might serve my interest could the palm of my hand contain a hogshead; but in general my interest is better served by an inability to contain so much. We apply these certain principles to revelation, and we say, God hath given in the christian religion an infinite multitude of ideas; as in nature he hath created an infinite multitude of objects. These objects are diversified without end, they are of

various sizes, colours, and shapes, and they are capable of innumerable motions, productive of multifarious effects, and all placed in various degrees of perspicuity: objects of thought in the christian religion are exactly similar; there is no end of their variety; God and all his perfections, man and all his operations, the being and employment of superior holy spirits, the existence and dispositions of fallen spirits, the creation and government of the whole world of matter, and that of spirit, the influences of God and the obligations of men, the dissolution of the universe, a resurrection, a judgment, a heaven, and a hell, all these, placed in various degrees of perspicuity, are exhibited in religion to the contemplation of intelligent creatures. The creatures, who are required to contemplate these objects, have various degrees of contemplative ability, and their duty, and consequently their virtue, which is nothing else but a performance of duty, consists in applying all their ability to understand as many of these objects, that is, to form as many ideas of them, as are apportioned to their own degree. So many objects they are capable of seeing, so many objects it is their duty to see. So much of each object they are capable of comprehending, so much of each object it is their duty to comprehend. So many emotions they are capable of exercising, so many emotions it is their duty to exercise. So many acts of devotion they can perform, so many Almighty God will reward them for performing, or punish them for neglecting. This I call the

doctrine of religious proportion. This I have a right to expect to find in a divine revelation, and this I find in the most splendid manner in christianity, as it lies in the Bible, as it was in the first churches, and as it is in some modern communities. I wish I could change the word some for all.

This doctrine of proportion would unroost every human creed in the world, at least it would annihilate the imposition of any. Instead of making one creed for a whole nation, which, by the way, provides for only one nation, and consigns over the rest of the world to the destroyer of mankind; instead of doing so, there should be as many creeds as creatures; and instead of affirming, the belief of three hundred propositions is essential to the felicity of every man in both worlds, we ought to affirm, the belief of half a proposition is essential to the salvation of Mary, and the belief of a whole one to that of John, the belief of six propositions, or, more properly, the examination of six propositions, is essential to the salvation of the reverend Edward, and the examination of sixty to that of the right reverend Richard; for, if I can prove, one has sixty degrees of capacity, another six, and another one, I can easily prove, it would be unjust to require the same exercises of all; and a champion ascribing such injustice to God would be no formidable adversary for the pompousness of his challenge, or the caparisons of his horse: his very sword could not conquer, though it might affright from the field.

The world and revelation, both the work of the

same God, are both constructed on the same principles; and were the book of scripture like that of nature, laid open to universal inspection, were all ideas of temporal rewards and punishments removed from the study of it, that would come to pass in the moral world, which has actually happened in the world of human science, each capacity would find its own object, and take its own quantum. Newtons will find stars without penalties, Miltons will be poets, and Lardners christians without rewards. Calvins will contemplate the decrees of God, and Baxters will try to assort them with the spontaneous volitions of men; all, like the celestial bodies, will roll on in the quiet majesty of simple proportion, each in his proper sphere shining to the glory of God the Creator. But alas; *We have not so learned Christ!*

Were this doctrine of proportion allowed, three consequences would follow. First: Subscription to human creeds, with all their appendages, both penal and pompous, would roll back into the turbulent ocean, the *See* I mean, from whence they came; the bible would remain a placid emanation of wisdom from God; and the belief of it a sufficient test of the obedience of his people. Secondly: Christians would be freed from the inhuman necessity of execrating one another; and, by placing christianity in believing in Christ, and not in believing in one another, they would rid revelation of those intolerable abuses, which are fountains of sorrow to christians, and sources of arguments to infidels. Thirdly: Op-

portunity would be given to believers in Christ to exercise those dispositions, which the present disproportional division of this common benefit obliges them to suppress, or conceal. O cruel theology, that makes it a crime to do what I have neither a right nor a power to leave undone!

I call *perfection* a third necessary character of a divine revelation. Every production of an intelligent being bears the characters of the intelligence, that produceth it, *for as the man is, so is his strength.* A weak genius produces a work imperfect and weak like itself. A wise, good being produces a work wise and good; and, if his power be equal to his wisdom and goodness, his work will resemble himself; and such a degree of wisdom, animated by an equal degree of goodness, and assisted by an equal degree of power, will produce a work equally wise, equally beneficial, equally effectual. The same degrees of goodness and power accompanied with only half the degree of wisdom, will produce a work as remarkable for a deficiency of skill as for a redundancy of efficiency and benevolence. Thus the flexibility of the hand may be known by the writing: the power of penetrating, and combining in the mind of the physician, may be known by the feelings of the patient, who has taken his prescription; and, by parity of reason, the uniform perfections of an invisible God may be known by the uniform perfection of his productions.

I perceive, I must not launch into the wide ocean of the doctrine of perfection, and I will confine

myself to three characters of imperfection, which may serve to explain my meaning. Proposing to obtain a great end without the use of proper means —the employing of great means to obtain no valuable end—and the destroying the end by the use of the means employed to obtain it, are three characters of imperfection rarely found in frail intelligent agents ; and certainly they can never be attributed to the great Supreme. A violation of the doctrine of analogy would argue God an unjust being; a violation of that of proportion would prove him an unkind being ; and a violation of this of perfection would argue him a being void of wisdom. Were we to suppose him capable of proposing plans impossible to be executed, and then punishing his creatures for not executing them, we should attribute to the best of beings the most odious dispositions of the most infamous of mankind. Heaven forbid the thought !

The first character of imperfection is *proposing to obtain a great end without the use of proper means.* To propose a noble end, argues a fund of goodness : but not to propose proper means to obtain it, argues a defect of wisdom. Christianity proposes the noble end of assimilating man to God, and it employs proper means of obtaining this end. God is an intelligent being happy in a perfection of wisdom; the gospel assimilates the felicity of human intelligences to that of the Deity by communicating the ideas of God on certain articles to men. God is a bountiful being happy in a perfection of goodness ; the gospel assimilates

the felicity of man to that of God by communicating certain benevolent dispositions to its disciples, similar to the communicative excellencies of God. God is an operative being happy in the display of exterior works beneficent to his creatures; the gospel felicitates man by directing and enabling him to perform certain works beneficent to his fellow creatures. God condescends to propose this noble end, of assimilating man to himself, to the nature of mankind, and not to certain distinctions foreign from the nature of man, and appendent on exterior circumstances. The boy, who feeds the farmer's meanest animals; the sailor who spends his days on the ocean; the miner, who, secluded from the light of the day, and the society of his fellow creatures, spends his life in a subterraneous cavern, as well as the renowned heroes of mankind, are all included in this condescending benevolent design of God. The gospel proposes to assimilate all to God; but it proposes such an assimilation, or, may I say—such a degree of moral excellence, as the nature of each can bear, and it directs to means so proper to obtain this end, and renders these directions so extremely plain, that the perfection of the designer shines with the utmost glory.

I have sometimes imagined a Pagan ship's crew in a vessel under sail in the wide ocean; I have supposed not one soul aboard ever to have heard one word of christianity: I have imagined a bird dropping a New Testament written in the language of the mariners on the upper deck; I have imagin-

ed a fund of uneducated, unsophisticated good sense in this company, and I have required of this little world answers to two questions: first, What end does this book propose? The answer is, This book *was written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name.* I ask secondly,—What means doth this book authorize a foremast man, who believes, to employ to the rest of the crew to induce them to believe, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing they also with the foremast man, may have eternal felicity through his name? I dare not answer this question; but I dare venture to guess, should this foremast man conceal the book from any of the crew, he would be unlike the God, who gave it to all; or should he oblige the cabin-boy to admit his explication of the book, he would be unlike the God, who requires the boy to explain it to himself; and should he require the captain to enforce his explication by penalties, the captain ought to reprove his folly for counteracting the end of the book, the felicity of all the mariners; for turning a message of peace into an engine of faction; for employing means inadequate to the end; and so for erasing that character of perfection, which the heavenly donor gave it.

A second character of imperfection is—*the employing of great means to obtain no valuable end.* Whatever end the author of christianity had in view, it is beyond a doubt, he hath employed great

means to effect it. To use the language of a prophet, he hath *shaken the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.* When *the desire of all nations* came, universal nature felt his approach, and preternatural displays of wisdom, power, and goodness, have ever attended his steps. The most valuable ends were answered by his coming. Conviction followed his preaching; and truths, till then shut up in the counsels of God, were actually put into the possession of finite minds. A general manumission followed his meritorious death, and the earth resounded with the praises of a spiritual deliverer, who had set the sons of bondage free. The laws of his empire were published, and all his subjects were happy in obeying them. *In his days the righteous flourished,* and on his plan, *abundance of peace* would have continued *as long as the moon endured.* Plenty of instruction, liberty to examine it, and peace in obeying it. These were ends worthy of the great means used to obtain them.

Let us for a moment suppose a subversion of the seventy second psalm, from whence I have borrowed these ideas: let us imagine *the kings of Tarshish and of the isles bringing presents,* not to express their homage to Christ, but to purchase that dominion over the consciences of mankind, which belongs to Jesus Christ; let us suppose the boundless wisdom of the gospel, and the innumerable ideas of inspired men concerning it, shrivelled up into the narrow compass of one human creed;

let us suppose liberty of thought taken away ; and the peace of the world interrupted by the introduction and support of bold usurpations, dry ceremonies, cant phrases, and puerile inventions : in this supposed case, the history of great means remains, the worthy ends to be answered by them are taken away, and they who should thus deprive mankind of the end of the sacred code, would charge themselves with the necessary obligation of accounting for this character of imperfection. Ye prophets and apostles ! ye ambassadors of Christ ! *How do ye say, we are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo ! certainly in vain made he it, the pen of the scribes is in vain !* Precarious wisdom, that must not be questioned ! useless books, which must not be examined ! vain legislation, that either cannot be obeyed, or ruins him who obeys it !

All the ends that can be obtained by human modifications of divine revelation, can never compensate for the loss of that dignity, which the perfection of the system, as God gave it, acquires to him ; nor can it indemnify man for the loss of that spontaniety, which is the essence of every effort, that merits the name of human, and without which virtue itself is nothing but a name. Must we destroy the man to make the christian ! What is there in a scholastic honour, what in an ecclesiastical emolument, what in an archiespcopal throne, to indemnify for these losses ! Jesus Christ gave his life a ransom for men, not to empower them to

enjoy these momentary distinctions; these are far inferior to the noble ends of his coming: the honour of God, and the gospel at large; the disinterested exercise of mental abilities, assimilating the free-born soul to its benevolent God; a copartnership with Christ in promoting the universal felicity of all mankind; these, these are ends of religion worthy of the blood of Jesus, and deserving the sacrifice of whatever is called great among men.

Thirdly:—*The destruction of the end by the use of the means employed to obtain it*, is another character of imperfection. Saint Paul calls christianity, *unity*. He denominates it *the unity of the Spirit*, on account of its author, object, and end. God the supreme Spirit, is the author of it, the spirits, or souls of men are the object, and the spirituality of human souls, that is, the perfection of which finite spirits are capable, is the end of it. The gospel proposes the reunion of men divided by sin, first to God and then to one another; and, in order to effect it, reveals a religion, which teaches *one God, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; one* rule of *faith, one* object of *hope;* and, lest we should imagine this revelation to admit of no variety, we are told, *grace is given to every one according to the proportional measure of the gift of* christianity. Each believer is therefore exhorted to *speak the truth in love, to walk with all lowliness, meekness, and long suffering*, and to *forbear* another *in love*. Here is a character

of perfection, for these means employed to unite mankind are productive of union, the end of the means.

Should men take up the gospel in this simplicity, and, accommodating it to their own imaginary superior wisdom, or to their own secular purposes, should they explain this union so as to suit their designs, and employ means to produce it; and should they denominate their system, christianity, it would certainly be, in spite of its name, a christianity marked with the imperfection of its authors; for in the Christian religion, in the thing itself, and not in its appellation, shines the glorious character of perfection.

The christian religion unites mankind. By what common *bond* does it propose to do so? By *love*. This is a *bond of perfectness*, a most perfect bond. This is practicable, and productive of every desirable end; and the more we study human nature, the more fully shall we be convinced, that we cannot imagine any religion to do more, nor need we desire more, for this answers every end of being religious. Had Jesus Christ formed his church on a *sentimental* plan, he must have employed many means, which he has not employed, and he must have omitted many directions, which he has given. One of his means of uniting mankind is contained in this direction, *Search the Scriptures*, and *call no man your master upon earth;* that is to say, exercise your very different abilities, assisted by very different degrees of aid, in periods of very different duration, and form your own no-

tions of the doctrines contained in the scriptures. Is not this injunction destructive of a sentimental union? Place ten thousand spectators in several circles around a statue erected on a spacious plain, bid some look at it through magnifying glasses, others through common spectacles, some with keen naked eyes, others with weak diseased eyes, each on a point of each circle different from that, where another stands, and all receiving the picture of the object in the eye by different reflections and refractions of the rays of light, and say, will not a command to look destroy the idea of sentimental union; and, if the establishment of an exact union of sentiment be the end, will not looking, the mean appointed to obtain it, actually destroy it, and would not such a projector of uniformity mark his system with imperfection?

Had Jesus Christ formed his church on the plan of a *ceremonial* union, or on that of a *professional* union, it is easy to see, the same reasoning might be applied; the laws of such a legislator would counteract and destroy one another, and a system so unconnected would discover the imperfection of its author, and provide for the ruin of itself.

These principles being allowed, we proceed to examine the doctrines of christianity, as they are presented to an inquisitive man, entirely at liberty to choose his religion, by our different churches in their several creeds. The church of Rome lays before me the decisions of the council of Trent. The Lutheran church the confession of Augsburg.

One nation gives me one account of christianity, another a different account of it, a third contradicts the other two, and no two creeds agree. The difference of these systems obliges me to allow, they could not all proceed from any one person, much less could they all proceed from such a person, as all christians affirm Jesus Christ to be. I am driven then, to examine his account of his own religion contained in the allowed standard book, to which they all appeal, and here I find, or think I find, a right of reduction, that removes all those suspicions, which variety in human creeds had excited in my mind concerning the truth of christianity.

The doctrines of christianity, I presume to guess, according to the usual sense of the phrase, are divisible into two classes. The first contains the principal truths, the pure genuine theology of Jesus Christ, essential to the system, and in which all christians in our various communities agree. The other class consists of those less important propositions, which are meant to serve as explications of the principal truths. The first is the matter of our holy religion, the last is our conception of the manner of its operation. In the first we all agree, in the last our benevolent religion, constructed on principles of analogy, proportion, and perfection, both enjoins and empowers us to agree to differ. The first is the light of the world, the last our sentiments on its nature, or our distribution of its effects.

In general each church calls its own creed a system of christianity, a body of christian doctrine,

and perhaps not improperly: but then each divine ought to distinguish that part of his system, which is pure revelation, and so stands confessedly the doctrine of Jesus Christ, from that other part, which is human explication, and so may be either true or false, clear or obscure, presumptive or demonstrative, according to the abilities of the explainer who compiled the creed. Without this distinction, we may incorporate all our opinions with the infallible revelations of heaven, we may imagine each article of our belief essential to christianity itself, we may subjoin a human codicil to a divine testament, and attribute equal authenticity to both; we may account a proposition confirmed by a synodical seal as fully authenticated, as a truth confirmed by an apostolical miracle; and so we may bring ourselves to rank a conscientious disciple of Christ, who denies the necessity of episcopal ordination, with a brazen disciple of the devil, who denies the truth of revelation, and pretends to doubt the being of a God.

But here, I feel again the force of that observation, with which this preface begins. How few, comparatively, will allow, that such a reduction of a large system to a very small number of clear, indisputable, essential first principles, will serve the cause of christianity! How many will pretend to think such a reduction dangerous to thirty-five out of thirty-nine articles of faith! How many will confound a denial of the essentiality (so to speak,) of a proposition, with a denial of the truth of it! How many will go further still, and exe-

crate the latitudinarian, who presumes in this manner to subvert christianity itself! I rejoice in prospect of that *day, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to his gospel;* when we shall stand, not at the tribunal of human prejudices and passions, but at the just bar of a clement God. Here, were I only concerned, I would rest, and my answer to all complainants should be a respectful silence before their oracles of reason and religion: but alas! I have nine children, and my ambition is (if it be not an unpardonable presumption to compare insects with angels) my ambition is to engage them to treat a spirit of intolerance, as Hamilcar taught Hannibal to treat the old Roman spirit of universal dominion. The enthusiastic Carthaginian parent, going to offer a sacrifice to Jupiter for the success of an intended war, took with him his little son Hannibal, then only nine years of age, and eager to accompany his father, led him to the altar, made him lay his little hand on the sacrifice, and swear that he would never be in friendship with the Romans. We may sanctify this thought by transferring it to other objects, and, while we sing in the church glory to God in the highest, vow perpetual peace with all mankind, and reject all weapons except those which are spiritual, we may, we must declare war against a spirit of intolerance from generation to generation. Thus Moses wrote *a memorial in a book, rehearsed it in the ears of Joshua, built an altar, called the name of it Jehovah my banner, and said, the Lord hath sworn, that the*

Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

We are neither going to contrast human creeds with one another, nor with the Bible; we are not going to affirm or deny any propositions contained in them; we only design to prove, that all consist of human explications as well as divine revelations; and consequently, that all are not of equal importance, nor ought any to be imposed on the disciples of Christ, either by those who are not disciples of the Son of God, or by those who are. The subject is delicate and difficult, not through any intricacy in itself, but through a certain infelicity of the times. An error on the one side may be fatal to revelation, by alluring us to sacrifice the pure doctrines of religion to a blind benevolence; and on the other, an error may be fatal to religion itself, by inducing us to make it a patron of intolerance. We repeat it again, a system of christian doctrine is the object of christian liberty; the articles, which compose a human system of christian doctrine, are divisible into the two classes of *doctrines*, and *explications;* the first we attribute to *Christ*, and call *Christian* doctrines, the last to some of his *disciples*, and these we call *human* explications; the first *are* true, the last *may be* so; the first execrate intolerance, the last cannot be supported without the spirit of it. I will endeavour to explain my meaning by an example.

Every believer of revelation allows the authenticity of this passage of holy Scripture; *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten*

Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. If we cast this into propositional form, it will afford as many propositions as it contains ideas. Each idea clearly contained in the text I call an idea of Jesus Christ, a christian sentiment, a truth of revelation, in a word a *christian doctrine.* Each of these ideas of the text, in forming itself into a proposition, will naturally associate with itself a few other ideas of the expletive kind; these I call secondary ideas in distinction from the first, which I call primary; or, in plainer style, ideas clearly of the *text*, I name christian doctrines, or doctrines of Christ, and *all the rest* I call human explications of these doctrines; they may be christian, they may not; for I am not sure, that the next idea, which always follows a first in my mind, was the next idea to the first in the mind of Jesus Christ; the first is certainly his, he declares it, the second might be his; but as he is silent, I can say nothing certain; where he stops, my infallibility ends, and my uncertain reason begins.

The following propositions are evidently in the text, and consequently they are christian doctrines emanating from the author of christianity, and pausing to be examined before the intelligent powers of his creatures.—There is an *everlasting life*, a future state of eternal happiness—the mediation of *the only begotten Son of God* is necessary to men's enjoyment of eternal happiness—*believing* in Christ is essential to a participation of eternal felicity—every believer in Christ *shall have everlasting life*

—unbelievers shall *perish*—all the blessings of christianity originate in *God,* display his *love,* and are *given* to the *world.* These, methinks, we may venture to call primary ideas of christianity, genuine truths of revelation; but each doctrine will give occasion to many questions, and although different expositors will agree in the matter of each proposition, they will conjecture very differently concerning the manner of its operation.

One disciple of Christ, whom we call Richard, having read this text, having exercised his thoughts on the meaning of it, and having arranged them in the propositional form now mentioned, if he would convince another disciple, whom we name Robert, of the truth of any one of his propositions, would be obliged to unfold his own train of thinking, which consists of an associated concatenation of ideas, some of which are primary ideas of Jesus Christ, and others secondary notions of his own; additions, perhaps of his wisdom, perhaps of his folly, perhaps of both; but all, however, intended to *explicate* his notion of the text, and to facilitate the evidence of his notion to his brother. Robert admits the proposition; but not exactly in Richard's sense. In this case, we assort ideas, we take what both allow to be the original ideas of our common Lord, and we reckon thus:—Here are nine ideas in this proposition, numbers one, three, six, nine, genuine, primary ideas of Christ; numbers two, four, five, secondary ideas of Richard; numbers seven, eight, secondary ideas of Robert; the first constitute a divine doctrine, the last a hu-

man explication : the first forms one divine object, the last two human notions of its mode of existence, manner of operation, or something similar ; but, be each what it may, it is human explication, and neither synod nor senate can make it more.

No divine will dispute the truth of this proposition, God gave Jesus Christ to believers ; for it is demostrably in the text. To this, therefore, Beza and Zanchy, Melancthon and Luther, Calvin and Arminius, Baxter and Crisp agree, all allowing it a christian doctrine ; but each associating with the idea of gift other ideas of time, place, relation, condition, and so on, explains the doctrine, so as to contain all his own additional ideas.

One class of expositors take the idea of *time*, and by it explain the proposition. God and believers, says one, are to be considered contemplatively *before the creation* in the light of Creator and creatures, abstracted from all moral considerations whatever ; then God united Christ to his church in the pure mass of creatureship, without the contemplation of Adam's fall. Another affirms, God gave a Saviour to men in *design before* the existence of creatures ; but in full contemplation, however, of the misery induced by the fall. A third says, God gave Christ to believers, not in purpose before the fall ; but in *promise* immediately *after* it. A fourth adds, God gives Christ to believers *on their believing*, by putting them in possession of the benefits of christianity. In all these systems, the ideas of God, Christ, believers,

and gift remain, the pure genuine ideas of the text; and the association of *time* distinguisheth and varieth the systems.

A second class of expositors take the idea of *relation*, and one affirms, God and believers are to be considered in the relative light of *governor and subjects;* the characters of a perfect government are discernible in the giving of a Saviour, justice vindicates the honour of government by punishing some, mercy displays the benefit of government by pardoning others, and royal prerogative both disculpates and elevates the guilty. However, as the governor is a God, he retains and displays his absolute right of dispensing his favours as he pleases. A second says, God and believers are to be considered in the light of *parent and children*, and Christ is not given to believers according to mere maxims of exact government; but he is bestowed by God, the common Father, impartially on all his children. A third says, God and believers are to be considered in the light of *master and servants*, and God rewards the imperfect services of his creatures with the rich benefits of Christianity. A fourth considers God and believers in the relation of *King and consort*, and says, God gave christianity as an inalienable dowry to his chosen associate. In all these systems, God, Christ, believers, and gift remain, the pure genuine ideas of the text; and the association of the idea of *relation* distinguishes and varies the systems.

In general, we form ideas of the Supreme Being, and we think, such a being ought to act so and so, and therefore we conclude he does act so and so. God gives Christ to believers conditionally, says one, for so it becomes a holy being to bestow all his gifts. God gives Christ unconditionally, says another; for so it becomes a merciful being to bestow his gifts on the miserable. I repeat it again, opposite as these may appear, they both retain the notions of the same God, the same Jesus, the same believers, the same giving; but an idea concerning *the fittest way of bestowing* the gift distinguishes and varies the systems. I call it the same giving, because all divines, even they, who go most into a scheme of conditional salvation, allow, that Christ is a blessing infinitely beyond all that is due to the conditions, which they perform in order to their enjoyment of him.

Let us for a moment suppose, that this proposition, God gives Christ to believers, is the whole of revelation on this subject. A divine, who should affirm, that his ideas of time, relation, and condition, were necessarily contained in this scripture; that his whole thesis was a doctrine of christianity; and that the belief of it was essential to salvation, would affirm the most palpable absurdities; for, although the proposition does say, Christ is God's gift to believers, yet it does neither say, *when* God bestowed this gift, nor *why* he bestowed it, nor that a precise knowledge of the *mode* of donation is essentially requisite to salvation. That God gave the world a Saviour in

the person of Jesus is a fact affirmed by Christ in this proposition, and therefore a christian doctrine. That he made the donation absolutely or conditionally, before the fall or after it, reversibly or irrevocably, the proposition doth not affirm; and therefore every proposition including any of these ideas is an article of belief containing a christian doctrine and an human explication, and consequently it lies before an examiner in different degrees of evidence and importance.

Suppose a man were required to believe this proposition, God gave Jesus to believers absolutely; or this, God gave Jesus to believers conditionally; it is not impossible, the whole proposition might be proved original, genuine, primary doctrine of Jesus Christ. Our proposition in this text could not prove it, and were this the whole of our information on this article, conditionality and unconditionality would be human explications: but, if Christ have given us in any other part of revelation, more instruction on this subject; if he any where affirm, either that he was given on certain conditions to be performed by believers, or that he was not given so, then indeed we might associate the ideas of one text with those of another, and so form of the whole a genuine christian doctrine.

When we have thus selected the instructions of our divine Master from the opinions of our fellow-pupils, we should suppose, these questions would naturally arise:—Is a belief of all the doctrines of Christ essential to salvation? If not, which are the essential truths? If the parable of the talents

be allowed a part of his doctrine, and if the doctrine of proportion taught in that parable be true, it should seem, the belief of christian doctrines must be proportioned to exterior evidence and interior ability; and, on these principles, should a congregation of five hundred christians put these questions, they must receive five hundred different answers. *Who is sufficient for these things!* Let us renounce our inclination to damn our fellow-creatures. Let us excite all to faith and repentance, and let us leave the decision of their destiny to Almighty God. *When Christ cometh he will tell us all things.* Till then let us wait, lest we should scatter *fire-brands, arrows, and death,* and *make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad.* How many doctrines are essential to salvation, seems to me exactly such a question, as—how much food is essential to animal life?

We will venture to go a step further. Were we as capable of determining the exact ratio between any particular mind and a given number of ideas, as we are of determining how many feet of water a vessel of a given burden must draw; and were we able so to determine how much faith in how many doctrines was essential to the holiness, and so to the happiness of such a soul; we should not then entertain a vain notion of exacting by force these rights of God of his creature. For, first, the same proportion, which renders a certain number of ideas essential to the happiness of an intelligent

mind, renders this number of ideas so clear, that they establish themselves and need no imposition. Secondly; the nature of faith does not admit of imposition; it signifies nothing to say, kings command it; if angels commanded it, they would require an impossibility, and exact that of me, which they themselves could not perform. Thirdly; God has appointed no means to enforce belief; he has nominated no vicegerents to do this; he has expressly forbidden the attempt. Fourthly; the means, that one man must employ to impose his creed on another, are all nefarious, and damn a sinner to make a saint. Fifthly; imposition of human creeds has produced so much mischief in the world, so many divisions among christians, and so many execrable actions, attended with no one good end to religion, that the repetition of this crime would argue a soul infested with the grossest ignorance, or the most stubborn obstinacy imaginable. Sixthly; dominion over conscience is that part of God's empire of which he is most jealous. The imposition of a human creed is a third action, and before any man can perform it, he must do two other exploits; he must usurp the throne, and claim the slave. How many more reasons might be added! From a cool examination of the nature of God—the nature of man—the nature of christianity—the nature of all powers within the compass of human thought to employ—the history of past times—the state of the present—in a word, of every idea, that belongs to the imposition of a human creed, we venture to affirm,

the attempt is irrational, unscriptural, impracticable, impossible. Creed is belief, and the production of belief by penal sanctions neither is, nor was, nor is to come. The project never entered the mind of a professor of any science, except that of theology. It is high time, theologists should explode it. The glorious pretence of establishing by force implicit belief, should be left to the little tyrant of a country school; let him lay down dry documents, gird false rules close about other men's sons, lash docility into vanity, stupidity or madness, and justify his violence by spluttering, *Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas.*

Were christians sincere in their professions of moderation, candour, and love, they would settle this preliminary article of IMPOSITION, and, this given up, there would be nothing else to dispute. Our objections lie neither against surplice nor service book; but against the imposition of them. Let one party of christians worship God as their consciences direct; but let other parties forfeit nothing for doing the same. It may appear conjectural; but it is sincerely true, theological war is the most futile and expensive contest, theological peace the cheapest acquisition in the world.

Although the distinction of a divine revelation from a human explication is just and necessary; although the principles of analogy, proportion, and perfection, are undeniable; and although, considered as a theory, the nature and necessity of uni-

versal toleration will be allowed to be as clear and demonstrative as possible, yet we are well aware, the allowance of these articles in all their fair, just, necessary consequences would be so inimical to many dispositions, and so effectually subversive of so many selfish, interested systems, that we entertain no hopes of ever seeing the theory generally reduced to practice. Heaven may exhibit a scene of universal love, and it is glorious to christianity to propose it; it is an idea replete with extatic joy, and, thanks be to God, it is more than an idea, it is a law in many christian churches, alas! little known, and less imitated by the rest of their brethren. There is *a remnant of Jacob in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.* These may chearfully adopt the prophet's exultation,—*Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! If I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me; he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. In the day, that my walls are to be built, in that day shall* human *decrees* concerning conscience *be far removed.*

On these general principles the sermons in this volume are selected; and on these the reader will at once perceive why it does not contain the whole system of any one subscriber, or the whole system of the author. Each contains primary truths, which all allow, and secondary explications, which some believe, which others doubt, and which some

deny. I have not been able to form the volume wholly on this plan; but I have endeavoured to approach it as nearly as my materials would permit.

The first sermon is introductory, and exhibits Jesus Christ on the throne in the christian church, solely vested with legislative and executive power, prohibiting the exercise of either in cases of religion and conscience to all mankind. The twelve following sermons propose *four* objects to our contemplation, as christianity represents them. The first is *man*, in his natural dignity, his providential appointment, and his moral inability. The second is *Jesus Christ* mediating between God and men, and opening by what he did and suffered our access to immortal felicity. The sermon on the dignity of our Lord, in this part, will be considered by some as a principal essential *doctrine*, while others will account it Mr. Saurin's *explication* of a doctrine of ineffable dignity, which they allow; but which they explain in another manner. The third object proposed is *the mode of participating* the benefits of Christ's mediation, as faith, repentance, and so on. The fourth consists of *motive objects* of christianity; so I venture to call the christian doctrines of judgment, heaven, and hell, belief of which gives animation and energy to action. The last sermon is recapitulatory, and proves, that variety is compatible with uniformity, yea, that uniformity necessarily produceth variety. When I call this volume, sermons on the principal doctrines of christianity, I mean to affirm, it contains a general view of the

most obvious, and the least disputable articles of christian theology, according to the notions of the French reformed churches.

I have only to add my sincere prayers to the God of all grace, that he may enable us all to *put on* this *armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in* this *evil day, and, having done all, to stand; for we wrestle against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* May he grant, *that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, *may we grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ, to whom* alone *be* DOMINION OVER CONSCIENCE *for ever and ever!* Amen.

REMARKS

ON

CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

The Preface to the Fourth Volume of a Translation of

SAURIN'S SERMONS.

[THE THIRD EDITION ; PRINTED 1800.]

REMARKS, &c.

THIS volume is a sketch of christian morality, such as the sermons of Mr. Saurin afford. Had the author drawn them up with a particular design of exhibiting a full view of the subject, he would have assorted and arranged ideas, which now lie dispersed and intermixed. However, we trust the arrangement will appear neither improper nor unedifying.

There are two general opinions among divines concerning the origin of morality and religion. Some suppose, that all the knowledge, which the world ever had of these subjects, was at first *revealed*, and hath been continued to this day by tradition. Others, on the contrary, think, that without revelation men may, and actually do, by the mere exercise of their natural powers *discover* the being of a God, and the consequent obligations of men. Both classes, however, affirm, that revelation gives force to moral duties, and so is essential to the practice of real virtue.

This is not the place to enter into disputes: we will content ourselves with a few plain remarks on

the nature and obligations of men, and on the moral influence of the gospel; and for this purpose we will divide the subject into three parts, and consider, first nature; secondly obligation; and lastly motive.

1. NATURE. There is hardly a word in the English language of more vague and indeterminate meaning than the word *nature*. In this place I mean by it the native state, properties, and peculiarities of men. If man be a creature consisting of soul and body; if each hath properties, powers or faculties peculiar to itself, obligation to employ these to the ends for which they were intended by the Creator, must necessarily follow. Ancient philosophy, therefore, connected together the natural with the moral state of man, and reasoned from the one to the other. Without superior information by revelation from God, there is no other way of determining what men are, or are not expected to perform.

It would be easy to lose ourselves in metaphysical speculations concerning the nature, the operations, and the duration of the soul; and it would be as easy to lose ourselves in attempting precisely to determine, among an infinite number of feelings, ideas, perceptions, aversions, sensations and passions, where the last power of body ends, and where the first operation of spirit begins. Perhaps we are to expect only a general knowledge of such subjects. That the happiness of both depends on a certain harmony between thought and action is beyond a doubt; and that in a life made up of a

course of thinking and acting, thinking ought to precede action, is equally clear. To act is to do something, and every intelligent creature ought to do whatever he does for a reason. In the nature of man, then, avoiding all perplexing refinements, and confining our views to plain and useful observation, there are three things considerable;—*happiness* the end of men's actions; *actions* the means of obtaining the end; and *reason* which discovers, selects, and enforces rules of uniting the means with the end.

2. Obligation. We divide this article into two parts; *obligation* and *sense of* obligation. We begin with the first. By exercising our reason to find out proper means of obtaining happiness, we collect a set of ideas concerning the duties of life, and putting these together we call the collection, morality. As this collection consists of a great variety of duties, or actions proper to obtain happiness, we find it convenient to divide them into several classes, and as each class contributes its share toward the production of the general end, happiness, we consider the whole in the light of *obligation;* for every creature is obliged to seek its own happiness, and it is natural to man to do so.

The condition of man in regard to the Supreme Being, his Creator, is that of absolute dependence; and hence comes the first distribution of the duties of life into a class called *natural theology; theology* because God is the object of our contemplation, and *natural* theology because the duties to be done in regard to God are such,

and such only as are discoverable by our observing and exercising our reason on the works of nature. By considering ourselves we find a second class of ideas, which make up what is called *moral philosophy*, or more properly *moral theology;* and in this we place the rules by which man conducts himself to become virtuous in order to become happy. Extending our views a little further, and taking in proper notions of the various situations in life, to which men are subject, and the various connections, which we necessarily have in the world, we perceive a set of general principles just and useful, and all necessary to the happiness of these situations and relations; and hence comes a third branch of morality, called *general policy*, or common prudence. The next exertion of thinking and reasoning regards nations, and to this belongs a large class of ideas, all tending to public prosperity and felicity; *national policy* is therefore a fourth branch of morality, and it includes all the actions necessary to govern a state, so as to produce civil order and social happiness. To these, by extending our thoughts yet further, we proceed to add the *law of nature*, and the *law of nations*, both which go to make up the general doctrine of *manners* which we call morality.

If man aim at happiness, if he consult reason by what means to acquire it, if he be naturally impelled to perform such actions as are most likely to obtain that end, he will perceive that the reason of each duty is the obligation of it. As far then as man is governed by reason, so far doth he ap-

prove of the bond or obligation of performing the duties of life.

Let us attend to *sense of* obligation. Should it appear on examination, and that it will appear on the slightest examination is too evident, that the senses of the body irritate the passions of the heart, and that both, conspiring together against the dominion of reason, become so powerful as to take the lead, reason, will be perverted, the nature and fitness of things disordered, improprieties and calamities introduced, and consequently the great end, happiness, annihilated. In this case the nature of things would remain what it was, obligation to duties would continue just the same, and there would be no change except in the *order* of actions, and in the loss of that end, happiness, which order would have produced.

This speculation, if we advert to the real state of things, will become a fact fully established in our judgments: true, the first branch of morality is natural theology; but have mankind in general, in all ages and countries, sought rational happiness in worshipping the One great supreme? Whence then is idolatry, and whence that neglect of the father of universal nature, or what is worse, that direct opposition to him? Morality we grant, hath always been, as it yet continues to be, beautifully depicted in academical theses; professors of each branch of literature have successively contributed to colour and adorn the subject; and yet in real life neither the law of nature, nor that of nations, nor that of private virtue, or public policy

hath been generally obeyed; but, on the contrary, by crimes of all descriptions *the whole earth* hath been *filled with violence.* Alas! what is the life of each individual but a succession of mistakes and sins? What the histories of families, nations, and great monarchies, but narrations of injustice and woe? Morality, lovely goddess, was a painting of exquisite art placed in proper light in a public gallery for the inspection and entertainment of connoisseurs; but she was cold and her admirers unanimated: the objects that fired their passions had not her beauty, but they were alive. In one word, *obligation* to virtue is eternal and immutable; but *sense of* obligation is lost by sin.

3. Motive. We will not enter here on that difficult question, the origin of evil. We will not attempt to wade across that boundless ocean of difficulties, so full of shipwrecks. Evil is in the world, and the permission of it is certainly consistent with the attributes of God. Our inability to account for it is another thing, and the fact is not affected by it. Experiment hath convinced us that revelation, along with a thousand other proofs of its divinity, brings the irrefragable evidence of *motive* to obedience: a heavenly present, and every way suited to the condition of man.

It would be endless to enumerate the motives to obedience, which deck the scriptures as the stars adorn the sky; each hath been an object of considerable magnitude to persons in some ages, and situations; but there is one of infinite magnificence, which eclipses all the rest, called *the sun of righ-*

teousness, I mean, Jesus Christ. In him the meekness of Moses, and the patience of Job, the rectitude of the ten commandments, and the generosity of the gospel are all united; and him we will now consider a moment in the light of motive to obedience.

By considering the *prophecies*, which preceded his advent, and by comparing his advent with these prophecies, we are impelled to allow the divinity of his mission. This is one motive, or one class of motives to moral obedience. By observing the *miracles*, which he wrought, we are obliged to exclaim with Nicodemus, *no man can do what thou doest, except God be with him.* This is a second class of motives. By attending to his *doctrines* we obtain a third set of powerful and irresistible motives to obedience. His *example* affords a fourth, for his life is made up of a set of actions, all manifestly just and proper, each by its beauty commending itself to every serious spectator.

This moral excellence, this conformity to Jesus Christ is the only authentic evidence of the truth of our faith, as the apostle Paul teaches us with the utmost clearness in the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. Faith and practice, in the christian religion, are inseparably connected; for as there can be no true morality without faith in the docrines of Christ, so there can be no true faith without christian morality; and it is for this reason chiefly, that we should be diligent to distinguish the pure doctrines of revelation from human explications, because a belief of the

former produces a holy conformity to the example of Christ, while an improper attachment to the latter leaves us where zeal for the traditions of the fathers left the Jews. We have treated of this at large in the preface to the third volume, and it is needless to enlarge here. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*

REMARKS

ON

SAURIN'S SERMONS.

The Preface to the Fifth Volume of the Translation.

[THE SECOND EDITION, PRINTED 1800.]

REMARKS, &c.

IT was not my intention, when I translated the first four volumes of Mr. Saurin's sermons, to add any more; but, willing to contribute my mite towards the pleasure and edification of such as having read the four desired a fifth, I took an opportunity, and added this fifth volume to a second edition of the four first. There is no alteration worth mentioning in the four, except that, the editor thinking the fourth too thin, I have given him a dissertation on the supposed madness of David at the court of Achish, translated from the french of Mr. Dumont, which he has added to increase the size of that volume, following, however, his own ideas in this, and not mine.

Saurin's sermons in the original are twelve octavo volumes, eleven of which are miscellaneous, and one contains a regular train of sermons for Lent, and is the only *set* of sermons amongst the whole. The four English volumes are composed of a selection of sermons from the whole with a view to a kind of order, the first being intended

to convey proper ideas of the true character of *God*, the second to establish *revelation*, and so on: but this volume is miscellaneous, and contains fourteen sermons on various subjects. For my part, almost all the sermons of our author are of equal value in my eye, and each seems to me to have a beauty peculiar to itself, and superior in its kind: but when I speak thus I wish to be understood.

It is not to be imagined, that a translator adopts *all* the sentiments of his author. To approve of a man's religious views in general is reason sufficient to engage a person to translate, and it would be needless, if not arrogant, to enter a protest in a note against every word in which the author differed from the translator. In general, I think, Saurin is one of the first of modern preachers; and his sermons, the whole construction of them, worth the attention of any teacher of christianity, who wishes to excel in his way; but there are many articles taken separately in which my ideas differ entirely from those of Mr. Saurin, both in doctrine, rites, discipline, and other circumstances.

For example: our author speaks a language concerning the *rites* of christianity, which I do not profess to understand. All he says of infant baptism appears to me erroneous, for I think infant baptism an innovation. When he speaks of the Lord's supper, and talks of a *holy* table, *consecration*, *august* symbols, and sublime *mysteries* of the sacrament, I confess, my approbation pauses, and I feel the exercise of my understanding

suspended, or rather diverted from the preacher to what I suspect the sources of his mistakes. The Lord's supper is a commemoration of the most important of all events to us, the death of Christ; but I know of no mystery in it, and the primitive church knew of none; mystery and transubstantiation rose together, and together should have expired. *August symbols* may seem bombast to us, but such epithets ought to pass with impunity among the gay and ever exuberant sons of France.

Again: in regard to church *discipline*, our author sometimes addresses civil magistrates to suppress scandalous books of divinity, and exhorts them to protect the church, and to furnish it with sound and able pastors; but when I translate such passages, I recollect, Mr. Saurin was a presbyterian, a friend to establishments, with toleration however, and in his system of church discipline the civil magistrate is to *take order*, as some divines have sublimely expressed it. My ideas of the absolute freedom of the press, and the independent right of every christian society to elect its own officers, and to judge for itself in every possible case of religion, oblige me on this subject also to differ from our author.

Further: Mr. Saurin, in his addresses to *ministers*, speaks of them in a style much too high for my notions. I think, all christians are *brethren*, and that any man, who understands the christian religion himself, may teach it to one other man, or to two other men, or to two hundred, or to

two thousand, if they think proper to invite him to do so; and I suppose what they call ordination not necessary to the exercise of his abilities; much less do I think that there is a secret something, call it holy ghost, or what else you please, that passes from the hand of a clerical ordainer to the whole essence of the ordained, conveying validity, power, indelible character, and so to speak, creation to his ministry. Mr. Saurin's colleagues are *levites holy* to the Lord, *ambassadors* of the King of kings, *administrators* of the new covenant, who have written on their foreheads *holiness to the Lord*, and on their breasts the names of the *children of Israel!* In the writings of Moses all this is history; in the sermons of Mr. Saurin all this is *oratory;* in my creed all this is *nonentity.*

It signifies so little to the world what such an obscure man as I believe and approve, that I never thought to remark any of these articles in translating and prefacing the first four volumes: but lest I should seem, while I am propagating truth, to countenance error, I thought it necessary to make this remark. Indeed, I have always flattered myself for differing from Saurin; for I took it for probable evidence that I had the virtue to think for myself, even in the presence of the man in the world the most likely to seduce me. Had I a human oracle in religion, perhaps Saurin would be the man:—but *one is our master even Christ.*

Notwithstanding these objections, I honour this man for his great abilities; much more for the

holy use he made of them in teaching the christian religion; and also for the seal, which it pleased God to set to his ministry; for he was, in the account of a great number of his brethren, *a chosen vessel* unto the Lord, filled with an *excellent treasure of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, and his ministry was attended with abundant success. As I have been speaking of what I judge his defects, it is but fair to add a few words of what I account his excellencies.

My exact notions of the christian ministry are stated in the tenth sermon of this volume, entitled *the different methods of preachers.* Mr. Saurin, after the apostle Paul, divides christian ministers into three classes. The first *lay another foundation* different from that which is laid. The second build on the right foundation, *wood, hay, and stubble.* The third build on the same foundation, *gold, silver, and precious stones.* I consider Mr. Saurin as one of the last class, and I think it would be very easy to exemplify from his own discourses the five excellencies, mentioned by him as descriptive of the men.

First: there is in our author a wise *choice of subjects*, and no such thing as a sermon on a question of mere curiosity. There are in the twelve volumes one hundred and forty four sermons; but not one on a subject unimportant. I shall always esteem it a proof of a sound, prudent understanding in a teacher of religion, to make a proper choice of doctrine, text, arguments, and even images and

style adapted to the edification ot his hearers. Where a man has lying before him a hundred subjects, ninety of which are indisputable, and the remaining ten extremely controverted and very obscure, what but a wayward genius can induce him nine times out of ten to choose the doubtful as the subjects of his ministry.

Saurin excells, too, in the *moral* turn of his discourses. They are all practical, and, set out from what point he will, you may be sure he will make his way to the heart in order to regulate the actions of life. Sometimes he attacks the body of sin, as in his sermon on the *passions*, and at other times he attacks a single part of this body, as in his sermon on the *despair of Judas;* one while he inculcates a particular virtue, as in the discourse on the *repentance of the unchaste woman*; another time piety, benevolence, practical religion in general: but in all he endeavours to diminish the dominion of sin and to extend the empire of virtue.

Again: another character of his discourses is what he calls *solidity*, and which he distinguishes from the falacious glare of mere wit and ingenuity. Not that his sermons are void of invention and acuteness; but it is easy to see his design is not to display his own genius, but to elucidate his subject: and when invention is subservient to argument, and holds light to a subject, it appears in character, beautiful because in the service and livery of truth. Mere essays of genius are for schools and under graduates; they ought never to appear in the christian pulpit; for sensible people do not

attend sermons to *have men's persons in admiration*, but to receive such instruction and animation as may serve their religious improvement.

Further: our author, to use again his own language, excelled in "weighing in just balances truth against error, probability against proof, conjecture against demonstration, and despised the miserable sophisms of those, who defended truth with the arms of error." We have a fine example of this in the eleventh sermon, on *the deep things of God*; and there fidelity and modesty are blended in a manner extremely pleasing. The doctrine of the divine decrees hath been very much agitated; and into two extremes, each under some plausible pretence, divines have gone. Some have not only made up their own minds on the subject, in which they were right, but they have gone so far as to exact a conformity of opinion from others, and have made such conformity the price of their friendship, and, so to speak, a ticket for admittance to the Lord's supper, and church communion: in this they were wrong. Others, struck with the glaring absurdity of the former, have gone into the opposite extreme, and thought it needless to form any sentiments at all on this, and on other subjects connected with it. Our author sets a fine example of a wise moderation. On the one hand, with a wisdom that does him honour, he examines the subject, and with the fidelity of an upright soul openly declares in the face of the sun that he hath sentiments of his own, which are those of his own community, and he thinks those of

the inspired writers. On the other hand, far from erecting himself, or even his synod into a standard of orthodoxy, a tribunal to decide on the rights and privileges of other christians, he opens his benevolent arms to admit them to communion, and, with a graceful modesty, to use his own language, *puts his hands on his mouth*, in regard to many difficulties that belong to his own system. I think this sermon may serve for a model of treating this subject, and many others of the christian religion. There is a certain point, to which conviction must go because evidence goes before it to lead the way, and up to this point we believe because we understand; but beyond this we have no faith because we have no understanding, and can have no conviction because we have no evidence. This point differs in different men according to the different strength of their mental powers, and as there is no such thing as a standard soul, by which all other souls ought to be estimated, so there can be no such thing as a human test in a christian church, by which the opinions of other christians ought to be valued. There is one insuperable difficulty, which can never be surmounted, in setting up human tests, that is, *whose opinion shall be the test, yours or mine?* and the only consistent church in the world on this article, is the church of Rome.

Were men as much inclined to unite, and to use gentle, healing measures, as they are to divide, and to gratify an arbitrary, censorious spirit, they would neither be so ridiculous as to pretend to have no

fixed sentiments of their own in religion, nor so unjust as to make their own opinions a standard for all other men. There are in religion some great, principal, infallible truths, and there are various fallible inferences derived by different christians: in the first all agree, in the last all should agree to differ. I think this, I repeat it again, a chief excellence in our author. He has sentiments of his own, but he holds them in a liberal,generous manner, no way injurious to the rights of other men.

In the sermon above mentioned Saurin makes a fifth class, of mean, *superficial* builders, without elevation and penetration, and against these he sets such as soar aloft in the exercise of the ministry; and in this also he himself excells. His thoughts on some subjects are lofty, and his language sublime. He is not afraid of considering religion in union with our feelings, nor does he hesitate to address hope and fear, and other passions of our minds with those great truths of the gospel, which are intended to allure, awake, arouse, and excite us to action. Terribly sometimes does he treat of future punishment, and generally under the awful images made use of in holy scripture: delightfully at other times does he speak of eternal happiness in the enjoyment of God. On both these subjects, on the perfections of God, and on the exercise of piety, particularly in the closet, he stretches and soars, not out of sight beyond truth and the reason of things, but so high only as to elevate and animate his hearers. By the most exact rules of a wise and well directed eloquence

most of his sermons are composed: at first cool and gentle like a morning in May, as they proceed glowing with a pleasant warmth, and toward the close, not so much inflaming as settling and incorporating the fire of the subject with the spirits of his hearers so as to produce the brisk circulation of every virtue of which the heart of man is capable, and all which spend their force in the performance of the duties of life.

Our author always treats his hearers like rational creatures, and excells in laying a ground of argument to convince the judgment before he offers to affect the passions: but what I admire most of all in him is, conscientious attachment to the *connected sense of scripture.* The inspired book is that precisely, which ought to be explained in a christian auditory, and above all, that part of it the new testament, and the connected sense is that, which only deserves to be called the true and real sense of scripture. By detached passages, as Saurin observes, any thing may be proved from scripture, even that there is no God; and I question whether any one of our wretched customs hath so much contributed to produce and cherish error, as that of taking detached passages of scripture for the whole doctrine of scripture on any particular subject. An adept in this art will cull one verse from Obadiah, another from Jude, a third from Leviticus, and a fourth from Solomon's song, and compile a fundamental doctrine to be received as the mind of God by all good christians under the pain of his displeasure. Were this a common man, and not a sub-

lime genius under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and so beyond advice, I would presume to counsel him always to cap his medley of a sermon with a text from the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

Do we then propose Saurin as a model for all preachers? By no means. But as there are diversities of gifts for the edification of the church, each excellent in its kind, so we suppose Saurin a model in his own class. There is in the writings of the apostle Paul one of the finest allegories in the world to illustrate this subject. The christian church is considered under the image of an *human body*, and of this body God is considered as the spirit or *soul*; and the most refined morality is drawn from the fact. *The eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. If one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it; for it is the same God, which worketh all* diversities of gifts *in all* good men. It is highly probable, that what is affirmed of individuals may be true of collective bodies of men. One church may excel in literature, another in purity of doctrine, a third in simplicity of worship, a fourth in administration of ordinances, a fifth in sweetness of temper and disposition, and so on. It is not for us to investigate this subject now; let it suffice to observe that the French reformed church hath excelled in a clear, convincing and animating way of composing and delivering christian sermons. Never so warm as to forget reasoning, never so accurate as to omit energy, not always placid, not

always rapid, never so moral as to be dry and insipid, never so evangelical and savoury as to spiritualize the scriptures, till *the fat of a kidney* is as good a body of divinity as the whole sermon of Jesus Christ on the mount. Different as my ideas of some subjects are from those of Mr. Saurin, yet I wish we had a Saurin in every parish; yea so intirely would I go into the doctrine of the apostle's allegory just now mentioned, that I would encourage even a builder of *wood, hay and stubble,* suppose he erected his absurdities *on the foundation laid* in scripture, to *destroy the works of the devil* in any place where those works are practised. In a village made up of a stupid thing called a squire, a mercenary priest, a set of intoxicated farmers, and a train of idle, profligate and miserable poor, and where the barbarous rhymes in their church yard inform us that they are all either gone or going to heaven, (and we have too many such parishes in remote parts of the kingdom) would it not be infinitely better for society if an honest enthusiast could convert these people to piety and morality, though it were effected by spiritualizing all the flanks and kidnies, and bullocks and red cows mentioned in scripture? Any thing of religion is better than debauchery and blasphemy.

Such a set of converts would grow in time up to majority, and when of age would look back on their first religious nourishment as men do on the amusements of their childhood; and among other reformations would cleanse public instruction from Jewish allegory, pagan philosophy, and the gaudy

tinsel of the schools. From a state of gross ignorance and vice up to a state of the highest perfection of christian knowledge and virtue, lie infinite degrees of improvement, one above another in a scale of excellence up to *the first born of every creature,* the perfect teacher sent from God. In this scale our author occupies a high place in my eye, and if the reader chooses to place him a few degrees lower, I shall not contend about that ; for on my principles if he contribute in any, even in the least degree to the cause of truth and virtue, he is a foreigner worth our acquaintance, and the gallic in his appearance will not disgust a friend to the best interests of mankind. I say nothing of the *translation ;* it does not become me. Let those who are able do better. Envy of this kind I have none.

END OF THE PREFACES TO THE TRANSLATION OF SAURIN'S SERMONS.

MEMOIRS

OF THE LIFE OF THE

Rev. JOHN CLAUDE,

MINISTER OF THE FRENCH REFORMED CHURCH AT CHARENTON;

Prefixed to the first Volume of a Translation of

CLAUDE'S ESSAY ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON, WITH NOTES.

[FIRST PRINTED, 1782.]

MEMOIRS

OF THE LIFE OF THE

Rev. JOHN CLAUDE.

THE great and good Mr. John Claude, author of the following Essay, is in general so well known, that it may seem needless to relate his history. I cannot, however, deny myself the pleasure of recounting a few of the memorable actions of this eminent servant of God. In them, I flatter myself, my readers will find an apology sufficient at least to excuse the following short sketch of the man and his conversation. Encomiums given him by divines are innumerable; but such men as he merit more than human applause hath to bestow.*

Calvin and Beza, both natives of France, had introduced the reformation into their country in

* Dubito, an recentiori ætate aliquem majori omnes prosequuti sint veneratione quam JOANNEM CLAUDIUM. *Buddeus.* Vid. etiam. *Bayle—Mosheim—Act. Lips.—Vie de Claude* —Cum multis aliis.

the sixteenth century; and the doctrines of calvinism, along with the discipline of presbyterianism, were generally embraced by the French protestants. It is somewhat remarkable, that the reformed church in France was the most powerfully supported of any, and yet of all others the most barbarously persecuted; for, during five successive reigns, the prosestant religion was professed by many of the royal family, and by numbers of the nobility, and yet all its just claims were consumed with an inextinguishable rage of persecution.

It was in the year 1598, soon after the accession of Henry IV. that the reformed obtained, by an edict drawn up at Nantz, entire liberty of conscience, a free admission to all employments of trust, honour and profit, the use of churches, and universities, the liberty of holding synods, and whatever else was then thought necessary to the security of their civil and religious rights.

While the churches enjoyed these privileges, the Rev. Francis Claude, father of our Author, was successively pastor of several reformed congregations in Lower Guienne, and was universally esteemed for the pious and honourable manner in which he discharged his office. John was born at Sauvetat, in 1618: his father, who was a lover of polite literature, took care of his education during his youth; and at a proper time sent him to Montauban to finish his studies. Having accomplished his course of philosophy, he applied himself to the study of divinity under professors Garrisoles, and Charles. The fire of his imagination, the

acuteness of his judgment, the sincere piety of his life, and particularly the modesty and affability of his manners, obtained him as many friends as tutors. In him, from his earliest years, were united the gravity of a divine, and the easy politeness of a courtier.

Claude, the father, happy beyond expression in his son, was eager to see him in the sanctuary. The son, whose whole soul was bent on the ministry, and who could deny such a parent nothing, sunk his own desire of visiting other universities in the superior pleasure of gratifying the good old man. He had set his heart on ordaining his son, and the synod of Upper Languedoc, after they had examined, and fully approved of young Claude, nominated his father to ordain him to the church at La Treyne. He performed this office with unspeakable satisfaction, being now at the summit of his ambition; and died soon after, in the seventy fourth year of his age.

Mr. Claude served this church only one year; for the Synod appointed him to succeed Mr. Martel, in the church of St. Afrique in Rovergue. Here he devoted much of his time to study, (for the church was not large,)and his profiting appeared to all. It was soon observed, that he preached with great facility. His genius quickly collected materials, his judgment presently assorted and arranged them, his language was fluent, easy, just and manly, and his auditors declared, they could not distinguish in hearing him what he spoke extempore from what he had written.

About two years after he had resided at St. Afrique, he was desired to preach an occasionl sermon at Castres. This church had the honour of possessing the officers of the chamber of the Edict of Nantz, and a great number of other persons of quality and learning. The whole auditory was filled with admiration of his sermon, and so deep an impression did it make on them, that as they wanted a minister, they endeavoured to obtain Mr. Claude; but providence had designed him for another place. The church, however, acquired a kind of right in Mr. Claude, by giving him one of the most amiable of their members for a wife. Here he married Miss Elizabeth de Malecare whose father was an advocate in parliament. By her he had one son, born 1653, and named Isaac. Eight years Mr. Claude served the church of St. Afrique, greatly esteemed by his people, known and sought after by several other churches, and very much honoured by the Synod of Upper Languedoc, at which he was annually present.

The church of Nismes, which was one of the most conspicuous in France, being in want of a minister, applied to Mr. Claude, who, agreeably to the advice of his brethren, complied with their request, and was appointed pastor of this large congregation by the Synod of Upper Languedoc. The service of this church was very great. Preaching every day, visiting a great number of sick people, attending consistories, and church-business, required much labour; but Mr. Claude loved this kind of employment, and so discharged his office

as to give the highest satisfaction to his flock. He found time, moreover, to give divinity-lectures to a great number of students, who were admitted to make probationary sermons; and from this private school proceeded disciples of great merit, who accredited the master, from whom they received their instructions.

Mr. Claude's great reputation excited the envy and jealousy of the episcopal clergy, whose hatred of him grew with the growth of his usefulness, and at length outgrew all decency. They watched for an opportunity to get rid of him, and they soon found one, that served their purpose. But, before we relate the removal of Mr. Claude, it will be proper to describe the then present general posture of affairs.

When the first reformers claimed a right of private judgment in matters of religion, they claimed it of domineering prelates, who both denied the equity of the claim, and held the murdering of the claimants to be a part of religion. Above a hundred years after, the clergy of France employed Professor Quintin, (who had formerly professed himself a protestant; but had apostatized since to popery,) to harangue in their name the assembly of the states of Orleans, and to give lessons of cruelty to the king and queen-mother, in the presence of the three estates of the kingdom. This *humble and devout orator for the clergy*, as he styles himself, was pleased to say, "this, may it please your majesty, is what your clergy of France propose with all imaginable simplicity, obedience,

humility, submission and correction, with regard to the honour and service of God in your kingdom; that all the inhabitants of the kingdom shall be obliged to turn roman catholicks; that the non-christians shall not be admitted into the conversation and society of christian subjects; and that henceforward all hereticks shall be prohibited to trade in any merchandize, whether books or other goods. Our request is just, reasonable, holy and catholick, and grounded on the express command of God, who, enjoins your Majesty to grant it to us. Hereticks among Christians are reputed as gentiles, and God says, never contract a friendship with them, never associate or marry among them, suffer them not to inhabit the earth, have not the least compassion for them, beat them and kill them. The whole is amply and circumstantially discussed in the memorial of the clergy, to which we expect an answer." The humane hearts of laymen revolt at the open avowal of such cruelty; and though these execrable maxims had been long allowed the force of law, yet the wits of France posted up so many satirical pieces against the clergy's *humble orator*, that they literally *mortified* him, and actually joked him into his grave.*

Quintin's jurisprudence prevailed thirty-eight years after his death, and persecution, a sort of church polity, was adopted by the state. When the reformed church obtained liberty by the edict

* *Bezæ, Hist. Eccl.—La Place, de l'estat de la relig. et repub.—Varillas Char.* ix.

of Nantz, it acquired also a form of civil polity as a security for the maintenance of its religious liberty. The preservation of the peace of the kingdom was impossible without the protection of the reformed. The state, therefore, protected them; but the implacable souls of the state clergy never gave up the idea of blood-shedding; tigers they were created, tigers they continued; but for three and twenty years tigers in chains. The god at Rome, that made them, created them in his own image, *the image*, said an inspired prophet of a *beast!*

During this necessary cessation of ecclesiastical arms, that very bad man Cardinal Richlieu first invented a new mode of attacking the reformed. He thought—pacifick operations became christians—that it was high time to put a period to dissention—yea that an *union* of protestants and catholicks was very practicable.—Why could it not be effected? They were all children of the same parent, and brethren in Christ Jesus—their differences in opinion were less considerable than the over zealous on either side imagined—their systems indeed had some apparent inconsistencies; but, however, cool and candid explications might reconcile them. In this sophistical manner did this first born of deceit attack the reformed; and although he persuaded his master, or rather his slave, the deluded Lewis XIII. to deprive his protestant subjects of first one civil privilege, and then another, till he had stripped them of all, by reducing Rochelle, and had brought them to an absolute

dependence on the mere clemency of the crown, yet he kept preaching concord and union all the time, and beguiled many protestants into the snare.

Whether it were want of capacity, ignorance of regal courts, unacquaintedness with the true ground of separation from a papal hierarchy, love of the world, or whatever were the cause, it is certain, many pious persons were duped by this ecclesiastical artifice; and, surprising to tell! gave episcopal hirelings credit for religious liberty, and actually concerted measures for a projected union. Three sorts of persons were concerned in this ruinous enterprize. The first were *bad* men; a bribe did their business. The second were *credulous pietists;* specious pretences, soft words and silken nooses caught these woodcocks. The third were *wise and good* men; but prejudiced in prospect of seeming usefulness, and dazzled with the splendour of the great names of such as patronized the plan. Dury, Ferri, Amyraut, and Beaulieu, were all too deep in this scheme.* It was an observation of this usual flexibility, which induced a great statesman to affirm, that every man was purchasable, if his price were bid.

Richlieu and Lewis XIII. went each to his own place, while Claude was a student at Montauban: but their polity survived them, and fell into the hands of Lewis XIV. that is to say, into the hands of cardinals, confessors, jesuits, queens, and pros-

* See Bayle. *Amyraut* I—*Beaulieu* C—*Ferry* D.

titutes. It is a manifest solecism in history to affirm that all kings *reign*. Their majesties are slandered; one great soul now and then reigns, the rest allow their names to authorize the imperious passions of those, who gull them and govern their kingdoms.

In this state of affairs, while coalition was all the cry, the disinterested Claude, as wise a politician as any of them all, now pastor of the church of Nismes, was chosen moderator of the Synod of Lower Languedoc. He was a man eminently qualified to preside in such assemblies. He knew the world, as able physicians know poisons; the insidious artifices of bad men were transparent before the penetrating eye of his judgment, and he knew how to counteract them. He esteemed all good men; but he never thought of making their weaknesses maxims of church government. He was absolutely master of his own temper, and dexterous at catching the happy moment, in which the most stubborn and boisterous declaimers are manageable. His abilities were so well known, that he was listened to with attention, and his upright attachment to the reformed religion obtained a general confidence in all he said. He visited the nobility, dined with Messieurs the Intendants, paid pretty compliments to my lords, the prelates; but in matters of religion and conscience, he was ever known to be the inflexible, invariable, inconvertible John Claude.

In this synod he broke all court measures of coalition, and dismounted the machine of re-union

in this province. This rendered him obnoxious to some, less upright than himself, and presently came a decree of council prohibiting the exercise of his ministry throughout the whole province of Languedoc. Supported by a good conscience, he forbore preaching, and went to court; where after prosecuting his cause for six months, he was given to understand, that the decree was irrevocable, and that reformed ministers, not agreeable to the governors of the provinces, must be removed. We shall have occasion again to call over the project of re-union, and we defer a justification of Mr. Claude's conduct till then.

During Mr. Claude's residence in Paris, several persons of the first quality, and of exemplary piety informed him, that Marshal Turenne, who had resolved to quit the reformed religion, pretended to do so on conviction that the doctrine of transubstantiation had always been held by professing christians, into which persuasion he had been led by a book written either by Dr. Arnaud, or Dr. Nicolle, entitled *The Perpetuity of the Faith.* Had Mr. Claude acted on his own principles, he would have declined all attempts to fix a man of the marshal's character. He knew mankind too well to waste his theological treasure on men susceptible of the stronger impressions of character, fortune, and worldly glory. However, he yielded to the solicitations of his noble friends, and published a complete answer to the *Perpetuity,* in thirty anonymous pages. He traced the sophister through all his doublings, maintained the argu-

ments brought by Blondell and Aubertine, and vigorously pursued the fox, till he seemed to expire on the spot. The Jansenists were ready to go mad, so were all the Parisian catholicks; for, could they have found out the author, their friends the jesuits would soon have prevailed with *the head of their party* to have answered his arguments.*

Mr. Claude, not being able to get his prohibition taken off, left Paris, and repaired to Montauban, entirely resigned to the providence of God. He could not but be happy, wherever he went, for he carried along with him a mind, that could reflect with approbation on the past, a will submissive to the supreme will of God, a conscience unstained with guilt, a heart free from tormenting passions, and an undaunted confidence in the future protection of his Lord.

He arrived at Montauban on the Saturday, and the church insisted on his preaching next day. Contrary to his expectation, this people offered to employ him, the synod confirmed their choice, and he was again restored to his beloved pastoral labours. Here, the worthy man often said, he spent the four happiest years of his life. He loved Montauban, it was the place of his education. He lived in the most perfect union with his col-

* Lewis XIV. told the Duke of Orleans, he was displeased with him, because he took the part of Cardinal de Noailles, and spoke against the jesuits: *that*, said the king, *is declaring against a party, at the head of which I myself am.* What a glorious thing is it, exclaims Bayle, for a *king* to own himself at the head of a party!

leagues. There was a mutual esteem between himself and the whole church; and here, could he have enjoyed his wish, here would he have spent the residue of his days: but providence had greater work for Claude to do.

Marshal Turenne pretended, at first, to be satisfied with Mr. Claude's *answer* to the *Perpetuity:* but, about three years after, his doubts were all revived, yea strengthened by reading an *answer* to it, published by one of his old friends, the author of the *Perpetuity.* Claude was not so silly as to imagine that such men as the Marshal troubled themselves with comparing quotations from Greek and Latin fathers. The price of the next blue riband was a question of more consequence to them. However, as the Papists filled all France with shouts of victory obtained by this book, and as the protestant interest was affected by this popular clamour, Mr. Claude set about answering this paltry piece. The episcopal party understood, that some reformed minister was preparing an answer, they endeavoured to find out whence the news came, and who he was, that dare tarnish the glory of those, who were in vogue for the most learned and polite writers of France. At length, it was supposed, the hardy animal lived at Montauban, and the old setter, the bishop, was employed to find him out. This prelate affected great esteem for Mr. Claude, and endeavoured by familiar interviews to diminish the distance, that seemed to be between the episcopal crosier and the pastoral staff. He wanted to know, whether Mr. Claude

intended to answer Dr. Arnaud, and he wished to be indulged with a sight of the copy, if, as report said, there were such a thing. Mr. Claude, superior to concealment, shewed him a part of the copy; and although he despised the man for imagining he could impose on him, yet he informed him, that the other part of the copy was printing at Paris. I do not know who this bishop of Montauban was, nor will I look, for it does not signify; a bishop of France is a French bishop, and a French bishop is a bishop of France. Presently down came an order of council to prohibit the exercise of the ministry at Montauban to John Claude. Mr. Claude obeyed as before, resigned his charge, and went to Paris to get his suspension taken off.

No sooner was Mr. Claude arrived at Paris, than he was informed, that a stop was put to the impression of his book: however, next morning he was complimented with better tidings; for the Jesuits, having just then an occasion to lower the topsail of the Jansenists, and supposing that Claude's book might very well serve that purpose, procured, without any affection for him, an imprimatur. How happy for good men, that bad ones sometimes fall out!

Nine months was Mr. Claude detained at Paris in fruitless endeavours to get leave to return to Montauban. Although he knew, his was what they called an episcopal case, and that these causes were so privileged, that every process was sure to be lost; yet his desire to return to his charge, or

at least to acquit himself of the blame of negligence, induced him to try all means in his power. During his attendance here, the reformed church of Paris, which assembled at Charenton, determined to call him to the pastoral office among them, and they had influence enough at court to obtain leave to do so. It was a bold attempt, at first sight it should seem impracticable, to settle a preacher in the metropolis, who could not be borne with in a distant province: but the reformed nobility were politicians as well as christians, and they understood, as well as other men, the doctrine of lucky moments. One of these fell out at this time, and John Claude was associated at Charenton with Messieurs de L'Angle, Daille, and Allix, who, I think, were his colleagues.

Our pastor had not been long at Paris before he was obliged to take his pen a third time, to answer father Nouet. This Jesuit thoroughly understood that his own order neither intended to favour the reformed, nor to desert the papal cause in this important crisis, when one of the main pillars of popery was undermined, although they had held back the Jansenists from propping it up. Mr. Claude's answer to this famous disputant was his favourite book. All the reformed were extremely delighted with it, and particularly with the preface to it. This piece produced no bad consequences to Mr. Claude, as the former had done; for now Jesuits and Jansenists were formidable to each other, and their brangles were publick benefits.

Mr. Claude, as pastor of the church at Charenton, was placed on the pinnacle of the reformed church of France. Superiority in these churches was not obtained by patents and titles, and habits and hard words; but it was always allowed to sterling merit. Such Mr. Claude possessed, and that added to his situation, attracted the eyes of all France to him. Paris was the source of all the ecclesiastical mischiefs that afflicted the provincial churches; and Charenton was the place, to which they repaired for advice. Our sagacious pastor studied the advantages and disadvantages of his situation. He stood on an eminence, where he had the finest opportunity of reconnoitring the artful enemy; but this elevated station exposed himself at the same time to universal inspection. It required peculiar sagacity to distinguish his object of investigation from a thousand others, that surrounded it. It called for a singular dexterity and delicacy of action to avail himself of events as they turned up, and to improve them to the defeating of episcopal manœuvres, and to the confirmation of the reformed churches. Indefatigable attention, unremitted exertion, a frank deportment, and an impenetrable depth of thought, a clay-coldness toward secular things, a heart inflamed with holy zeal, a courage, that nothing could daunt, and a countenance alternately supple and severe, were all necessary at this critical conjuncture to the pastor of Charenton, and Mr. Claude possessed them all.

Religious liberty was that to the episcopal clergy, which Mordecai had formerly been to stately Haman. It shared no prelatical honours; but prelates could not be happy while it sat all contented and poor, at the king's gate. Its destruction was determined. Bishops prepared poisons, which underling mountebanks dispersed through all the provinces, under the sanction of patents from the crown. It is not imaginable, that vigorous religious freedom could expire without violent agonies. All the reformed church in France felt these dying pangs, and uttered lamentable groans. Claude, the meek and merciful Claude, whose tender soul dissolved at the sound of every human woe, was doomed to see his darling die, doomed to reside the last nineteen years of this convulsive scene at the mart of intelligence, Paris, that painful post of observation.

Would my limits allow it, I should have a melancholy pleasure in attending this noble soul, through all his various scenes: I should follow him in his private studies, his pastoral visits, his publick labours in churches and synods, and his attendance on great men. But I must content myself with relating only a few principal articles.

Dr. Arnaud, neither content with his own performances, nor with that of Nouet, once more attacked Mr. Claude on the old affair, *Perpetuity*, and now changed the ground, and pretended to produce proofs innumerable that the *Greek* church had always held the doctrine of transubstantiation. Mr. Claude answered a fourth time; and, as before, the publick did him justice, and allowed his

manifest superiority over these Port-royal champions. Dr. Arnaud had great advantages over Claude in procuring troops from the Greek pappas. Ambassadors, consuls, missionaries, all were employed to *hire* forces, and poor venal Greek bishops were glad to furnish what they wanted at a proper price. Claude had neither conscience, commission, treasure, nor inclination for this kind of traffick, and it was glorious to his cause to be superior to the want of it. Ye infallible, irrefragable, angelical, seraphical doctors! ye sons of the morning! Must your vanity bow down to an illiterate, paltry Greek pappa! Shall he have the glory of selling syllogisms at so much a score, and you the shame of buying them! Why, this is a fanciful import of *ivory, apes, and peacocks!**

Dr. Nicolle proceeded to harrass the reformed again by another work, entitled,—*Well grounded Prejudices against the Calvinists.* A base design of exciting a spirit of persecution, concealed under a crafty policy, and tending to ruin Christianity itself for the sake of involving the reformed in the catastrophe, distinguishes this bitter book. The Romanists, however, gained nothing by it; on the contrary, they lost much by Mr. Claude's answer, entitled,—*A Defence of the Reformation,* allowed by all to be a master-piece, the best defence of our separation from Rome, that either he,

* See *Bayle, Arnaud,* Rem. O. S.—*Spanheim Strict. in Expos. Episc. Condomens.*

or any other protestant minister had ever published.

Mr. Claude's next work is entitled *The Parable of the Wedding-Feast.* It consists of five Sermons on Mat. xxii. 1, &c. which he had preached with great acceptance at Charenton the year before the publication. This work at this time proved, that our pastor was not so intent on defending the outworks of religion as to forget the interior glory of it, for the sake of which the outworks stand.

About this time, Mr. Claude's only son, Isaac, returned from studying in the best academies in France, to his father, under whose tuition he might be prepared for the pulpit. For this purpose Mr. Claude drew up his *Essay on the composition of a Sermon,* of which I shall say no more in this place, than that it answered all his wishes on his son. The synod at Sedan examined him in September 1678, and the following October, his father enjoyed the pleasure of ordaining him to the church of Clermont Beauvoisis about fourteen leagues from Paris.

Mr. Claude, in this year of singular pleasure met with some mortifying circumstances. He saw the court apply every imaginable artifice to weaken the reformed churches. He found some of his own flock either imposing on themselves the papal yoke, or submitting at a certain price to have it imposed on them by others. He was not surprized at their pretended conversions; but he was extremely affected at the impiety of conducting them under a shew of argument and rational conviction. One day Mademoiselle de Duras, a

member of the church of Charenton, paying a visit to Mr. Claude, informed him, that she was under some scruples on account of her religion, and taking a paper out of her pocket, in which were contained some extracts from St. Augustine concerning the Eucharist, begged her pastor's assistance. Mr. Claude met this lady the next day at the Countess de Roye's, and was then informed, that she wished for a conference between her pastor and some divine of the church of Rome. Great pains were taken by Mr. Claude, and by several persons of quality, and piety, to dissuade Mademoiselle de Duras from desiring such a conference. Nothing could divert her from it.—She was sorry to say, she was deserted in her distress —this was what she had often been upbraided with,—the catholicks had frequently told her, the reformed ministers durst not shew their heads before the Roman doctors. — Her dear sister the Countess knew, as did the Marquis of Miremont, and Marshal de Lorge, the distress of her mind.— She had no doubt of the ability of her pastor,— and she had always found him a gentleman of finished complaisance, and affectionate sympathy with the sorrows of his people.—Did he know what good a conference would do her, he would not deny her this great act of charity. Thus the young enchantress pleaded, shedding all the time abundance of tears. Mr. Claude, who knew her conversion was predetermined, and that the whole was intended only to give an air of plausibility to her return to popery, was case-hardened

against all her compliments and all her tears. However, the tears of a young lady were irresistible arguments to the rest of the company, as they are to almost all mankind. Our pastor, therefore, was obliged to grant that to their joint opinions, which he had refused to the discourse of Miss Duras, and to agree to a conference. Were the conversion of souls to be effected by human power, juvenile female orators would be the proper missionaries. A delicate negligence of air, the soft suasion of a silver tongue, bedewed with the insinuating eloquence of a fluent eye, carried away all this circle against their own judgments; the grave pastor himself was forced along with the stream.

Before we attend the conference between Claude and Bossuet (for the bishop of Condom was the papal champion,) it is absolutely necessary to investigate the then present state of religious liberty in four contending communions. Thus we shall come clearly to the true springs of action, and be enabled to reprobate the favourite project of reunion, adopted by Bossuet, the pride of popery, and discover the inefficacy of those means, which Claude, the glory of presbyterian reformers, applied to destroy it. I should not hesitate, were Mr. Claude alive, humbly to lay the following thoughts at his feet; for, as Monsieur de Deveze rightly observes, this great man followed new discoveries, occasioned by new objections, which time enabled the christian world to make. Duration would be ill bestowed on the world, were the last

of mankind to govern themselves wholly by the reveries of the first.

The union of all christian congregations in one grand corporate body is a godlike design. The author of Christianity professed to aim at making all his followers one fold under one shepherd; and, had officious human folly let divine wisdom alone, union had been effected long ago. The idea has struck all mankind. Princes and prelates, civilians and divines have all attempted to produce union. Not a soul of them has succeeded; and, we will venture to affirm, the man will never be born, who can succeed on their principles. They have retained the end; but lost sight of the original means of effecting it. All other means, soft or sanguinary, papal, episcopal and synodical, controversial or pecuniary, all have divided christians more and more, and widened those breaches, which they pretended to heal. This rage of union was the soul of the seventeenth century, and it convulsed and distorted the body, as souls agitated by violent conflicting passions transform the features of an incarnate angel into the face of a fiend.*

The true original remedy for all these ills is the restoration of that PRIMITIVE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, which the Saviour of the world bestowed on his first followers. It was equal and universal. Church power was vested in the people, and the

* See *Moshiem, cent.* xvii. *sect.* ii. *part* 1. 12. &c. This celebrated historian has assembled here Roman, German, French, Dutch, and English peace-makers, and affirms the substance of what is said above.

exercise of it limited to each congregation. So many congregations, so many little states, each governed by its own laws, and all independent of one another. Like confederate states they assembled by deputies in one large ecclesiastical body, and deliberated about the common interests of the whole. The whole was unconnected with secular affairs, and all their opinions amounted to no more than advice devoid of coercion. Here was an union. Liberty was the object, and love was the bond.* It was an evil day, when princes hired the church for a standing army, and everlasting shame must cover the faces of those ecclesiasticks, who, like Judas, made their master a marketable commodity. Princes affected to be as wise as Solomon, and set lions to guard the steps of their thrones : but they had not penetration equal to the Jewish monarch ; his lions could not bite ; but theirs have devoured the creators of their being, elevation and form.

As long as church power is vested in any other hands than those, with whom our universal Lord Christ entrusted it, so long union of Christians is impossible : yea, we venture to add, so long is every mode of church-government indefensible ; nor is the reformation, or even christianity itself justifiable. Follow any plan of church government to its source, trace the reformation to its genuine springs, or pursue a profession of christian-

* Vid. *Moshiem, cent.* i. ii.—*Buddei Eccles. Apostolica*—cum multis aliis.

ity through all its meanders to its fountain, and all will be found to rise in a free voluntary exercise of judgment and will. This is not the union intended by many. I know it fast enough ; but if it be the only practicable union ; that of which alone the creator formed us capable ; that for the sake of which our sovereign Lord undertook to officiate as prophet, priest and king in this world ; that for the production of which his revelation, his doctrines, his ordinances, his officers, are all calculated ; that, in a word, on which hangs all intellectual felicity ; who are we, that we presume to sink the happiness of a world in a selfish ocean of rebellion against God !

Let us come to facts, as they stood at the time of this famous conference. Jesus Christ not having finished his church to the liking of the church of Rome, the doctors of this community had been obliged, through successive ages, to hold councils in order to complete the work. At length, fifteen hundred and sixty-three years after the birth of our divine architect, they came to a conclusion at Trent concerning the fashion of an everlasting door of entry into the building. An Italian priest of the family of Medicis, called Pope Pius the Fourth, issued out one bull to confirm the decrees of the council of Trent; and the next year another, in which all ecclesiasticks were commanded to be admitted into the Roman church, by taking a solemn oath of obedience to the Pope, of faith in all the doctrines taught by the church, of absolute submission to all the positive institutes of councils,

and particularly those of the council of Trent, and finally of perseverance to the last moment of life in this profession.—So help you God, and this holy gospel!* My hand trembles so at touching this *taurum Phalaridis*, that, if any ask, *Is it peace?* I can only reply, with our Dr. Ames, *What peace so long as the witchcrafts of Jezebel are so many?* or with Joseph Hall, *Behold! God will judge these fat cattle!*†

Let us search for religious liberty in a second community, the episcopal church of England as it stood in this year. We say nothing of the then reigning prince, Charles II. His Majesty was a gentleman of more humane principles than any of his family. He was wholly devoted to gaiety and pleasure. As to religion he had none; but had he been left to himself he would have acted as other dissipated gentlemen act. He would have laughed at religion in every form, and have kept his hands clean from human blood. He hated to be tormented by the clergy to persecute the non-conformists. "You do nothing, said he to his bishops, and worse than nothing, and you want me to do every thing. If you had lived well, and taken pains to convince the non-conformists, the nation might have been settled; but you think of nothing but to get good benefices, and keep a good

* Voyez *Jurieu Hist. de Concile de Trente.—Reponse de Monsieur Claude. Pref. au L'Expos. de L'Eveque de Condom.*

† Vid. Lib. parvul. vere aureum, *Gul. Amesii*, cui tit. *Puritanismus Anglicanus*, 1610: cui add. *Jos. Halli Roma Irreconciliabilis.*

table. I had a very honest chaplain, to whom I gave a living in Suffolk; but he is a very great blockhead, and yet he has brought all his parish to church. I cannot imagine what he could say to them; for he is a very silly fellow: but he has been about from house to house, and I suppose his nonsense has suited their nonsense, and in reward of his diligence I have given him a bishoprick in Ireland."*

The episcopal church of England has a very pretty face, as many other ladies have; for SHE (I use *her* own style) proposes to make the *scriptures* sole judge in matters of faith: but, remember, gentle reader, they are the scriptures, not as Jesus Christ gave them, but *as explained* in certain subsidiary instruments called articles, creeds, homilies, liturgies and canons. If the scriptures speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them. Between college and church lie several instruments essential to admission, all to be executed previous to the enjoyment of any of the religious benefits of the corporation. The object in all these is the church of England, *as by law established.* The episcopal clergy know the truth of what I affirm. I have authentick copies before me of testimonials, letters of orders, and so on, taken from modern practice in one of the first dioceses in England. A man, who would judge rightly, ought to distinguish between the kingdom of Great Britain and the episcopal church in the

* *Burnet.*

kingdom. Britons enjoy religious liberty now, which they did not enjoy in the time of Mr. Claude; but episcopalians remain in *statu quo.* Then episcopacy rioted in the name of God and king Charles: now non-conformists rest happy beneath revolutional shade.

At the time of Claude's conference, cruel archbishop Sheldon was just dead. He had been a humble disciple of that great patron of persecuting power, Lord Clarendon,* and continued all his days a most inveterate enemy of the non-conformists, a tool of the prerogative, a man, who made a jest of religion, any farther than it was a political engine of state.† Him Sancroft succeeded, and now figured away at the head of affairs; that Sancroft, who went to *Crete* in search of episcopacy;‡ that Sancroft, who was frightened out of his wits at king James's assumption of arbitrary power, when it shook its black rod over episcopacy, and went to the Tower rather than submit to it; but who had contributed, with his associates, more than all the nation beside, to advance prerogative above law, when it might crush the non-conformists; that Sancroft, who like a mariner in a storm at sea, "prayed fervently to the God of peace for an universal blessed union of *all* reformed churches at *home* and abroad;" that archbishop of Canterbury, in a word, who was deprived for *Jacobitism* at the revolution; that was

* *Burnet.* † *Neal's Hist. of Puritans,* ann. 1677.
‡ Sancroft's Sermon on Tit. 1. 5.

the man, who, with Compton, Gunning, and others like themselves, then managed the doctrine of authority so as to exclude christian liberty.*

This very year the penal laws were in full force against nonconformists, and the execution of them in the hands of their avowed enemies. This year an insurrection, if not a massacre, was intended. In this blessed plan Pope Innocent XI. Cardinal Howard, and many other great men, were concerned. Church men were to kill dissenters, and papists them, the king was to be murdered, and the kingdom held in fee.†My God ! what calamities has popery produced!

An anglican bishop wrote to Mr. Claude for advice, as he pretended, how to conduct himself toward the English non-conformists. Mr. Claude knew well enough, if he censured episcopacy too severely, his beloved refugees would suffer for it; and if he treated it too mildly, his letter would be paraded about England to serve a bad cause; the clergy of France would all rise up against him, for even they affected to hold a pacifick episcopacy; and all his own presbyterian churches in France would consider him as a man, who ignorantly or wickedly built in England what he had destroyed at home. In this delicate situation the eyes of all were upon him, and though he could not break the snare, which the wily priest had set,

* See *Burnet—Neal—Calamy*—&c. Moshiem, cent xvii. ch. ii. s. 2. p. 2. 25.

† Neal, Vol. II. chap. 10. ann. 1678.

yet he avoided the mischief intended by it, with the utmost caution. He wrote; but finding the complaisance of his first letter abused, he wrote a second, and exceedingly blamed the rigour of the episcopal party in England. The priest, with true sacerdotal duplicity complimented Mr. Claude; but went no more to that foreign market to purchase praise for home consumption. He never printed Claude's last letter; but Mr. Isaac Claude published it after his father's death.*Here then was no religious liberty. Let us inquire for it in Mr. Claude's own community.

The first French reformers were of various sentiments both in doctrine and discipline; but the vicinity of Geneva, Lausanne, and other cities, which adhered to Calvin's system, together with the incredible zeal of this eminent man, and his two colleagues, Beza and Farel, affected France so as to engage the far greater part to adopt the presbyterian discipline. Accordingly, they held in the course of one hundred years, twenty-nine national synods. The first was held at Paris, in 1559, where Francis de Morell, Lord of Callonges, was president, and the last at Loudon, Nov. 10, 1659. In that, which was held at Alez in 1620, the decisions of the council of Dort were adopted. The following oath was "taken by all the synod, and ORDERED by them to be read in all provincial synods and universities, to be allowed, sworn to, and signed by pastors, elders, and professors of

* *Oeuvres Posthumes, tom.* v.

the universities, and by all, who pretended to be received into the ministry. If any one rejected the doctrines decreed by the canons of the council, either in whole or in *part*, and refused to make oath of his consent and approbation, the Synod *ordained*, that such refuser should not be admitted to any charge or employment, ecclesiastical or scholastical, whatsoever." This is the form of the oath. —" I, A. B. do swear and protest in the sight of God, and this holy assembly, that I do receive, approve of, and embrace *all the doctrine taught and agreed upon in the national synod of Dort*, as entirely conformable to the word of God, and that confession of faith, which is professed in our churches. I do swear and promise, moreover, to persevere during life, in the profession of the said doctrine; and to maintain it to the utmost of my power, and that neither in pulpit, nor in schools, nor in writing will I depart from THAT RULE." .... Then follow a few lines condemnatory of Arminianism, and the whole closes with these words .... " So help me, God! and be merciful to me, as I swear all as above, without any equivocation or mental reservation." What a wide field of speculation opens here! but we only ask, by what authority was this *yoke* put upon the necks of *another man's* disciples? and can a church thus constituted be said to possess *religious* liberty? * Let me be allowed to say, liberty of dissembling,

* *Quick's Synodicon.—Maimbourg's Peaceable Method.*—See *Herport on oaths.*

liberty of prevaricating, liberty of departing to seek redress elsewhere, none of these is liberty to be religious *in* such a community.

Sacred religious liberty! whither art thou fled! where shall I find thee! methinks I hear thy plaintive voice in the *wilderness*. Lovely inhabitant of the desert! how beautiful are thy feet even on the rugged mountains! how enlivening thy voice! lift it up with strength, and say unto the *cities*, peace, peace, behold your God.

Whether the fourth community, of which we now speak, came from the valleys of Piedmont, or whether it originated among those reformers, who, consistent with their own principles, made pure scripture the rule of reformation, it is certain, some societies appeared, very early, advocates for congregational church government. The churches included both baptists and independents. Some, as the Brownists, ran liberty into licentiousness; and others, as Robinson in Holland, and Jacob in England, sometimes explained, and arranged, and at other times rather cramped matters; but all held the grand principle of self-government, and the absolute independence of each congregation on any exterior jurisdiction. Here, as in all safe civil societies, the bases and principles of good government are held. *Individuals* are born free, each with liberty to dispose of himself. Several individuals congregated, carry together separate power, and deposit it in any degree, more or less, as *the whole* think fit, in one aggregate sum, in one or more hands for the publick good. Officers,

chosen by *all* to hold and dispense this delegated power, are in trust only, consequently responsible to their constituents, and all their power is constitutionally revertible to the source whence it came, on abuse of the trust, or at the demise of the trustee. As all this business is spiritual, power extends over spiritualities only. Life, liberty, property, credit, and so on, are all insured in another office, entrusted in other hands, under the care of civil governors. Here then is religious liberty. Various churches enjoy it in various degrees; but in those churches, where infants are excluded, and where all are volunteers, where each society pleaseth itself and injures nobody, where imposition is not known, and where blind submission cannot be borne, where each society is a separate family, and all together a regular confederacy, unpaid for believing, and far from the fear of suffering, there does religious liberty reign. We enjoy this liberty in Britain. It seems good to our civil governors to oblige us to purchase it by a resignation of some of our civil birth-rights. We think this hard. However, we pay the price, and enjoy the purchase.

This fort is more than tenable, it is invincible. Grant us *vox populi vox Dei;* only allow the PEOPLE to be the source of power, and we have a wish equal to that of Archimedes, and as much more glorious as the dignity of directing the world of spirit is superior to that of guiding the motion of matter. Farewell popery, prelacy, presbytery; I

have understanding as well as you. My Creator gave me ability to judge for myself. My Redeemer brought a charter from heaven to confirm my right of doing so, and gave me a rule to guide the exercise of my right. In the exercise of this right I may be holy and happy. The universe can do no more for me.

This long digression will abbreviate a longer narration of the famous dispute between Bossuet and Claude, which set all pens a going through England, Holland, and France. James Benigne Bossuet, first bishop of Condom, and last bishop of Meaux, was one of the most formidable adversaries of his time. He was a man of fine natural abilities. His address was insinuating, though his pretended eloquence was vile bombast. He had the souplesse of a courtier, along with as much learning and reading as usually fall to the share of a popish prelate. He was in the highest reputation and power, privy counsellor, bishop of a diocese, tutor to the Dauphin, and almoner to the Queen. He was master of all sorts of dissimulation, duplicity, and treachery. He had a heart cased with inhumanity, and a front covered with brass. Archbishop Wake in England, Claude in France, and numbers more, detected and exposed his falshoods; but nothing stopped his career; he rolled on, a mighty torrent of mischief, driving all before him; away went the reputable Fenelon along with the contemptible Claude! This finished instrument of wickedness disputed with Claude at the Countess de Roye's, in the presence

of several of the nobility. He had before published his famous *exposition of the catholic faith*, in which he had endeavoured so to explain the doctrines of popery, as to prove them perfectly agreeable to those of the reformed churches. Even moderate papists blushed for that shameful sacrifice of truth, which this audacious disputant made for the sake of gaining proselytes. Protestants have exposed his absurdity, and refuted his sophistry a thousand times over; but, after all, there is one argument, and that the capital one, which was urged home by the prelate, and which lies unanswered to this day. The following is a true translation of his words. "The supreme authority of *the church* is so necessary to determine····the sense of scripture, that even our adversaries, after they have reprobated it as an intolerable tyranny among us, have been obliged to establish it among themselves. When independents openly declared, that every believer ought to follow the dictates of his own conscience, without submitting to the authority of any bodies, or ecclesiastical assemblies of men, and on this principle refused to submit to the synods; that, which was held at Charenton in 1644, censured this doctrine for the same reasons, and on account of the same inconveniences, for which we reject it." He then goes on to shew that the synod entertained the same ideas of independency as the church of Rome embraced. He proves from the votes of the synod, that they allowed no right of *private* judgment; but insisted

under pain of excommunication, that every religious dispute should be referred to conference, from thence to consistory, thence to a provincial synod, and finally to a national synod, from which supreme court there lay no appeal. "Now, adds he, is not this as absolute a submission as we demand? The independents agree to be determined by scripture, so do you, and so do we. Wherein then do we differ? They pretend to be determined by their OWN sense of scripture; but you and we by that sense, which THE CHURCH gives it." Next he proceeds to quote the form of those letters missive, which the synod held at Vitre in 1617, had ordered to be sent by the provincial synods, by the hands of their deputies, to the national synod conceived in these terms:—"We promise before God to submit to WHATEVER SHALL BE CONCLUDED and resolved on in your holy assembly *(a tout ce qui sera conclu)* to obey and execute it to the utmost of our power, being persuaded that God will preside among you, and will guide you by his Holy Spirit into all truth and equity, according to his word." Exactly our state, exclaims the prelate. "This is an engagement to admit what the next synod should appoint, not if it should appear to YOU agreeable to the word of God; but if it should appear so to the SYNOD. For your parts, you reserve no right of examination. You are previously persuaded the Holy Spirit *will* preside in the assembly." The doughty champion has not yet done, he gives one push more, a home thrust it is. "The national synod of St. Foi, held in

1578, made an attempt to unite Calvinists and Lutherans in one general confession of faith. The provincial synods were required to authorize deputies to treat of, agree, and decide all points of doctrine, and other articles concerning an union. The national synod empowered four experienced ministers to conduct this business. If it were practicable, the formulary was to be sent to each synod for examination ; but if the said confession of faith could not be conveniently sent to be examined by all, then, confiding in the wisdom and prudence of their deputies, they empowered them to agree and *conclude* all matters under deliberation, both articles of doctrine, and all other things tending to the union of the two churches. Here now, says the prelate, here are four men furnished with full *power* to alter a confession of faith, which you offer to the world as a confession perfectly agreeable to the word of God, and for the maintenance of which you tell our kings, when you present it to them, an infinite multitude of you are willing to shed your blood. Pray, what does the catholick church require of her members more than the *pretended* reformed require of theirs ?"*

Pretended reformed is a title always given by papists to protestants. The reformed in France were obliged to name themselves so. The national assembly held at Tonneins 1614, humbly entreated their Majesties to free them from this mor-

* *Expos. de la doctrine de l'Eglis. Cathol. par Messire Jacques Ben Bossuet.* xx.

tifying necessity. This old cant is not yet out of date; for non-conforming ministers in England are yet admitted to exercise their ministry under the description of persons in holy orders, or in *pretended* holy orders. But, in reality, who are *reformed*, and who are only *pretendedly* so? They who retain, or they who discard the main pillar of popery, the transferring of a personal concern with God to a proxy? Every thing habited in blue or black among us we salute THE REVEREND; not that we affect empty titles, or attach ideas of power to them; but because we mean to bear a publick testimony to the reality of a right claimed by THE PEOPLE, a right of electing their own religious officers, and of conferring on them all that validity of ordination to office, which daring men in other communities have transferred from the people to their priests. Pretended reformers change the name, and preserve the thing. Real reformers remove the thing and remain indifferent about the name.

It would be endless to recite the arguments, and describe the books, which flew about in this controversy. I will, therefore, take my leave of it, and only observe, that Bossuet declared, Mr. Claude said the most and best, that could be said for a bad cause. He said all with the utmost sincerity; but prejudices of education, defects in a constitution of things, examples of parents and friends, all operated in this case on the humble and diffident Claude, who never pretended to infallibility. I may venture to add, his soul was superior

to his system. A theory of tyranny lay in his books and creeds; but he never acted on it in real life; but on the safer, because the more humane, liberal, and generous dispositions of his own good heart.

The episcopal clergy continued all this while invariably to pursue their favourite plan of extirpating the reformed; but it is not my design to attend these sanctimonious hypocrites through any other of their sanguinary measures, than those which affect Mr. Claude. It had long been a maxim of court policy, as Voltaire expresses it, to kiss the Pope's feet and tie his hands. The clergy knew their interest, and as the crown had at this time a dispute with Rome concerning the *regale*, that is, a collation to benefices, the clergy in a body waited on his Majesty to express their surprize at the papal claim. They took care, however, to play their cards cunningly, by sending an abject apology to the Pope, assuring him, they were obliged to act as they did. In their address to the King, they lamented, that the pretended reformed took advantage of their dispute with Rome to strengthen themselves in schism and sedition. They opened their convocations with the most fulsome sermons and harangues, that the lowest degree of sordidness could utter. Bossuet, like his predecessor Balaam, spouted away in his sermon from Num. xxiv. 5. *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!* A little change, soon made by a prelate of genius and erudition, metamorphosed the text into,—How goodly is thy conclave, O

Rome, and thy hierarchy, O Gallican church! Consequently, how heretical, schismatical, and seditious is the pretended reformed conventicle! The man runs metaphor-mad, and inflames all the convocation with a specious but a fiery zeal for extirpating heresy. At the end of the session they published instructions for the conversion of their dearly beloved brethren, the straying sheep of Christ, the pretended reformed. They dispersed circular letters through all the kingdom, and therein they insulted the miseries of a people, already harrassed to death by their cruelty. Crocodile cries and cant phrases, compliments and curses, the name of Christ and the spirit of Antichrist, the omnipotence of the throne and the nauseous titles of the prelates, made up those horrible instruments of devastation, entitled, *Circular letters of the Assembly of the Clergy of France.**

It was a bold attempt to expose the iniquity of these letters; however, Mr. Claude did so most effectually, by printing a small piece, entitled, *Considerations on the circular letters of the Assembly of the clergy of France of the year* 1682. This anonymous book was known to be his, and it did him great honour. Several of the prelates were men of birth, family and fortune; and, viewing them in this point of light, the author paid them several compliments and professed as much respect for them as was their due; but all of them were

* Voyez *Procez du Clerge du France—Affairs du Clerge*, 1680. 1, 2, &c.

the unprincipled tools of a gloomy tyrant, and were carrying on infernal schemes of a bloody polity under the name of Jesus Christ. In this light he detested the men, assumed an air of true dignity, upbraided them with their affected mildness, exposed their tyranny over conscience, declared that he did not own them for his masters, and that he took his pen only to state the principles of the protestants in a fair light, and to vindicate that liberty of conscience, which God had given to all mankind.

These letters of the Assembly not producing such effects as the prelates hoped, they procured an order for the notification of them to all the protestants in the kingdom. The Intendant of each province had orders to convene the protestant consistories, to take with him the bishop's vicar, and some other attendants, and to go in person and read the circular letter to each consistory. All the reformed churches fixed their eyes on Charenton, and determined to act in this new and difficult case as Mr. Claude should set them an example. Happily, Charenton was the first consistory summoned, and Mr. Claude was chosen to answer. The consistory met. Claude was in the chair. Monsieur the Intendant entered with his train, and read the letter. Mr. Claude replied in a few words, well chosen and full of sense.—He owned the august character with which Monsieur, the Intendant, was vested :—he declared, that he and his church had a profound respect for civil magistracy—that, as a proof of their submission to it,

they had assembled to hear him read a letter, which contained nothing but affliction for all the reformed—that my Lords the prelates challenged their respect on account of the rank, which his Majesty had thought proper to give them—but that, if they pretended in these letters to speak to them as from an ecclesiastical tribunal, he was bound in conscience to declare, that neither he nor his church did at all acknowledge their authority. This judicious answer was instantly printed, and it served for a model to all the other consistories through the kingdom.

Mr. Claude neglected no opportunity of doing good; but employed the little remaining breathing time in writing and publishing a small practical book on preparation for the Lord's supper, from 1 Cor. xi. 28. In this admired piece the author developes the human heart, follows the sinner through all his windings, takes off his mask, shews his misery, and conducts him to our Lord Jesus Christ as his sovereign good. This book had a most rapid sale. The people would have exploded transubstantiation, had not the king and the prelates forbidden them.

About this time, the university of Groningen invited Mr. Claude to accept of a professorship of divinity there. The offer was made with all the due forms, and with all the inducements that could be desired; but neither could the church at Charenton endure the thought of parting with their pastor, nor could the pastor bear to leave his flock at the approach of the heaviest storm, that had

ever fallen on them. He therefore returned a handsome answer to the university; but begged leave to decline the honour intended him. The disinterested shepherd of the flock at Charenton saw the thief and the wolf coming to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; but, not being a hireling, he determined not to flee, but to abide, and to lay down, if it should be necessary, his life for the sheep.

The calamities of the protestants increased every day, and the established clergy seemed to single out Claude in all their publications as the ring-leader of the heresy. He, all placid and serene in his conscience, answered what wanted answering, and despised the rest. Aware of the worth of every moment, he became more indefatigable than ever. He preached very often, and very frankly; he advised and assisted other churches; he opened his hand liberally to all his brethren's necessities; and pressed home practical religion in private more than ever. His church was now a noble sight; the countenances and the tears of his crouded auditories produced tenderness and zeal in occasional preachers, and excited the idea of a shipwrecked people climbing up a rock of hope. Sleep, and whispering, and compliments, and all the disgraces of christian worship were banished these assemblies, while all acts of piety and benevolence supplied their place.

At length the fatal year (1685) arrived, in which the long laid plot of extirpating protestantism, begun and conducted by those infernal instruments of des-

potism called BISHOPS of France, was to be executed. In *May* the clergy held an assembly at Versailles. Their deputies, as usual, harangued BAJAZET,* congratulated him for the success of his design to extirpate heresy, extolled the glory he had acquired by oppressing the reformed, above all the victories that he had ever obtained. In defiance of all the blood flowing in the Cevennes, and in all the distant provinces, and in spite of all the groans, that issued from gallies, banishments and dungeons, they assured the tyrant, he had raised *the church* to the highest pitch of glory, and filled it with joy because he had done the great work without fire or sword. However, to make neat, fashionable work, they added eight and twenty little articles more, all despotick and penal, which were yet to be done to finish off the exploit. This kind of orators have a patent for lying, and death and the devil have a commission, the first from Lewis, and the last from the pope, to silence all who dare contradict them.

The old chancellor, Father Le Tellier, perceiving he should die before the session of parliament, obtained of the king by frequent importunities,

* I allude to Mr. Rowe's Tragedy of Tamerlane. Dr. Welwood says, in this play he aimed at a parallel between William III. and Tamerlane, and Bajazet and Lewis XIV. and, he adds, since nothing could be more calculated for raising in the minds of the audience a true passion for liberty, and a just abhorrence of slavery, he wonders how this play came to be discouraged next to a prohibition in the latter end of Queen Anne's reign. The Dr. did not think proper to assign the reason; indeed it was unnecessary, all the world knew it.

that the grand affair, THE REVOCATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTZ, should be put off no longer; but that he might have the honour to put the seal to it before he expired. He was indulged, the edict was prepared, the seal was put to it Oct. 18th, and four days after it was registered in the chamber of vacations. This superannuated old sinner was so infatuated as to adopt Simeon's words, when he sealed the instrument. It was the last act of his chancellorship, and he died soon after with these words in his mouth, *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.* His panegyrist says, "*he went on singing the rest of the psalm when he got to heaven.*" I am not sure of that. I only know, all the bishops attended his funeral in their habits, and archbishop Flechier, a very good man when he was not ordered to be wicked, preached the funeral oration, said all the fine things he could invent, and declared that to be a PIOUS edict, a triumph of RELIGION, a most glorious monument of the PIETY of the king;* that edict, I say, which condemned two millions of rational beings to ruin for exercising their own reason in matters of religion, and did so in direct violation of oaths, and publick instruments, and all the ties, that usually bind mankind.

The edict was not yet *published* under the seal, and the church at Charenton obtained an order of council for the continuance of their publick wor-

* Ce *pieux* edit. Triomphe de la *foi*. La *picte* du Roi. *Flech. Orais. fun. pour Le Tellier.*

ship till it should be so. They obtained the favour, and spent their time in fasting, praying, preaching, settling their affairs, as well as they could, and deliberating whither to flee, and what to do. What oceans of sorrow for Claude at Paris, while Le Tellier was singing the eighty-ninth psalm in heaven!

The merciless bishops, loth to do the devil's work by halves, artfully set one snare more for Mr. Claude. They procured a *publication* of the edict under the seal on Thursday, Dec. 18th, and they took care to give the consistory at Charenton legal notice of it. They knew the edict could not be *registered* in parliament till the next week, and they hoped the protestants would meet on the intervening Lord's day for publick worship. In such a case, they intended to come into the church, speak to the people, and embroil them with the civil powers. Between the king and the parliament, prerogative and law, they intended, as between two milstones, to grind the reformed to powder. The better to succeed, they concealed their treachery; and, as they took no steps on the publication of the edict toward seizing the church, the good people supposed, compassion had for once entered the heart of a bishop, and that the small consolation of one, last, farewell Lord's-day worship, was a favour intended them. Mr. Claude knew the men too well not to distrust a favour coming from such suspected hands. He, therefore, dissuaded the ministers from preaching, and the people from assembling; they agreed, and the

church at Charenton was shut on the Lord's day. Some thought Mr. Claude took a hasty step; but others better informed said, it was a masterly stroke. It was a turn given to the rudder of a great ship, that was going to be wrecked; it came from the hand of a skilful pilot, whom God enabled to save the passengers, when he could not prevent the wreck of the vessel.

The ecclesiasticks, seeing their design defeated, and knowing by long experience that Claude must be the man, who had rendered their scheme abortive, were enraged beyond their usual measure; and declared, with true episcopal heroism, they would prevent his future over officious care of his flock, and spare him the pain of seeing their dispersion. They made their threatening good. On Monday, Dec. 22, the edict was registered in parliament. Fifteen days were allowed the ministers to depart the kingdom. The bishops found means to abridge this time in regard to Mr. Claude, and at ten o'clock on Monday forenoon he received orders to quit the kingdom within twenty four hours. One of the king's footmen was appointed to attend him to the frontiers of France. Mr. Claude was prepared for the event, and received the order as became a christian.

When God created John Claude, he laid him under the fatal necessity of committing the unpar donable sin in the account of those despotic hypocrites, popish prelates. These men never forgive the man, who has penetration enough to discover the true springs of their actions, and rectitude and

benevolence enough to abhor and expose them. Such men as Claude are not made up to their mind. An ignorant monk, who does not know the world, a needy spendthrift in distress for fear of his creditors, a dastardly cringing creature, who dare not call his soul his own, a lover of ease, a slave to praise, these, and others like them, are formed for servitude, and lick the feet of their lords the prelates, who, in great wisdom and piety, in pure love to their souls, and in a primitive laudable zeal for the glory of God, condescend to lead them through life in episcopal chains.

On Tuesday morning, Dec. 23, the man of God took coach at Paris for Brussels, intending to go and reside with his only son, who was then pastor of the Walloon church at the Hague. The king's footman treated him with all possible civility, his merit commanding the man's respect. At every stage he was complimented by persons of distinction. He slept one night at Cambray. The father rector of the Jesuits did him the honour of a visit, and the house presented him with what was in season. At length he arrived at the Hague, and in receiving and returning the embraces of his family for that evening, forgot his perils, and the remains of a fit of sickness, which he had before he left Paris.

A few days after his arrival, he had the honour of paying his respects to the prince and princess of Orange, and to the chief persons of the state. He was received in a manner, that overwhelmed his soul with joy; and he often declared, he could not

sufficiently admire the magnanimity of those illustrious men, who, the moment they quit an assembly, where they have appeared vested with the majesty of a sovereign state, converse with other men as if they thought them fellow citizens. The contrast between this court and that of France may well be supposed to strike our exile. Dignity here must seem the soft majesty of angels; but dignity there the ferocious swell of devils.

The Elector of Brandenburgh endeavoured to prevail with Mr. Claude to settle in his territories; but for particular reasons he declined it. The states provided for him at the Hague in a manner, which shewed their great opinion of his merit. The prince of Orange too settled a considerable pension on him. Here, then, he enjoyed all imaginable quiet. His house was the asylum of all the dispersed, and many a long night and day did he sit to hear their lamentable tales, soothing their sorrows, quieting their fears, reconciling their minds to a wise providence, and justifying the ways of God to men. Here he collected authentick materials for his last work, *The complaints of the Protestants of France.* He understood, that Bossuet, and the other French prelates, had the consummate impudence to affirm, that the government had used no force toward the protestants, that the bishops had converted them by reason, and argument, and gentle measures. Shocked at the accumulated impiety of the men, he stated the facts, painted the bishops in their own colours, publish-

ed the book, and appealed to all Europe. All Europe (except the Pope, and our James II. who caused the book to be burnt by the hands of the common hangman.) all Europe echoed,—Everlasting infamy cover the bishops of France!

Mr. Claude's course of life at the Hague was, in general, this. He rose early, worshipped God in private, and afterward with his family. The forenoon he spent in study, afternoons he devoted to visitors, for the people, who sought to converse with him, were innumerable: he ate a light and early supper, and received after it his intimate friends. "Here, says one of them, in those hours of freedom, in those easy conversations, we saw the very Mr. Claude. His serious openness of heart, his wise and affable conversation, his penetrating genius and sweet temper, afforded us the highest delight. These conversations always ended with the usual exercises of piety in his family. The company departed, and he retired to bed."

There was, at this time, no regular preaching in the Walloon church. Mr. Claude, however, preached there occasionally in his son's stead, and at other times elsewhere. Going to pay his respects to the Elector of Brandenburg at Cleve, the Duke desired him to preach in his palace at two in the afternoon. Mr. Claude did so from these words, *if any man be in Christ he is a new creature*, and so on. His highness was extremely pleased with the sermon, and he expressed his satisfaction to Mr. Claude in the most ample manner. The prince and princess of Orange often re-

quired him to preach before them. Mr. Claude had not a fine voice; but his auditors were always charmed with his sermons; and it was a smart saying of a gentleman, who was asked after sermon, how he liked the preacher:—*Every voice will be for him,* said he, *except his own.*

It was on December the 25th. 1686, that Mr. Claude preached one of his noblest sermons before their royal highnesses, from Luke i. 30, &c. The auditors were all extremely affected with this discourse, and passed the highest encomiums on it. All thought the preacher excelled himself; but little did they think, that, while he uttered himself with great eagerness, and was heated in his work, he was catching that illness, which would bring him to the grave.

In the evening he found himself uncommonly weary. In the night he had a fever, with violent pains all over him. Each following day he became worse and worse, and all perceived his dissolution approaching.

On Monday, Jan. 6, he sent for the senior pastor of the church, to whom in the presence of all his family he expressed himself thus. *Sir, I was desirous to see you, and to make my dying declaration before you. I am a miserable sinner before God. I most heartily beseech him to shew me mercy for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope he will hear my prayer. He has promised to hear the cries of repenting sinners. I adore him for blessing my ministry. It has not been fruit-*

less in his church; it is an effect of God's grace, and I adore his providence for it.

After pausing awhile he added. *I have carefully examined all religions. None appear to me worthy of the wisdom of God, and capable of leading man to happiness, but the christian religion. I have diligently studied popery and the reformation. The protestant religion, I think, is the only good religion. It is all found in the holy scriptures, the word of God. From this as from a fountain all religion must be drawn. Scripture is the root, the protestant religion is the trunk and branches of the tree. It becomes you all to keep steady to it.* The pastor told him, he was not surprized to hear him express himself so, after what he had preached and printed in books, which had so greatly edified the church.... *Ah! break off*, said he, interrupting him, *let us not speak of praises at a time when moments are so precious, and when they ought to be employed to a better use.* Here, being fatigued, he asked to be put to bed.

He frequently spoke of the happiness of those, who had left France for religion, and besought his family and friends to prize liberty of conscience. Mrs. Claude asked him one day, whether he was not sorry to leave her? *No*, replied he, *I am going to my God, and I leave you in his hands in a free country. What can I desire more either for you or myself?*

Not being able to sit up, he desired a friend to write, as he dictated, a letter to the prince of

Orange. It was short, gratulatory, and pathetick. With some trouble he signed it. His highness received it with great condescension; and, all hero as he was, he perceived, as he perused it, that he was a man as well as the writer. He blessed, and wept for the departing Claude.

A week before he died, with true patriarchal dignity, he sat up in his bed, and asked to speak with his son, and family. *Son*, said he, tenderly embracing him, *I am leaving you. The time of my departure is at hand.* Silence, and sobs, and floods of tears followed, each clasped in the others arms. The family all came, and asked his blessing. *Most willingly*, replied he, *will I give it you.* Mrs. Claude kneeled down by the bed-side: *My wife*, said he, *I have always tenderly loved you. Be not afflicted at my death. The death of the saints is precious in the sight of God. In you I have seen a sincere piety. I bless God for it. Be constant in serving him with your whole heart. He will bless you. I recommend my son and his family to you, and I beseech the Lord to bless you.* To his son, who, with an old servant, was kneeling by his mother, he said, among other things, *Son, you have chosen the good part. Perform your office as a good pastor, and God will bless you. Love and respect your mother. Be mindful of this domestic. Take care she want nothing as long as she lives. I give you all my blessing.* The afflicted family had not the power of making any answer, their tears and their silence spoke for them. The pastor being present, Mr. Claude desired him

to pray, adding, *Be short····I am so oppressed, that I can only attend to two of the great truths of religion, the mercy of God, and the gracious aids of his holy spirit.*

After this a delirium seized him. He had, however, his senses at times, and always employed those moments in edifying his attendants. Mons. Du Vivie visiting him in a lucid interval, and asking him of the state of his mind, he said with a deliberate composure, *I know whom I have believed, and, I am persuaded he is able to keep that, which I have committed unto him against that day.* Another time the senior pastor asked him, Do you know me, Sir? *Yes,* replied he, *you are my pastor····My whole recourse is to the mercy of God ····I expect a better life than this····help to fortify my meditations by your prayers.* Speaking at another time, to his son, he said, *Son, our Lord Jesus Christ is my only righteousness, I need no other, he is all sufficient.*

When Mons. Arbusse desired from the pulpit, before prayer, the prayers of the congregation for one of their brethren extremely ill, who deserved to be lamented by all good people, the congregation looked and listened; but when he added the sick person was *Mr. Claude,* the whole assembly burst into a flood of tears. Publick prayer was repeatedly offered for him; but the time of his departure was come, and on January 13, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, he resigned his soul into the hands of God, who gave it.

Thus lived, and thus died the inestimable John Claude. Forty two years he served the church of God, *with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befel him by the lying in wait of* men worse than *Jews,* though called christians. In France he was in the highest reputation. His friends loved him, and his adversaries feared him. His banishment compleated his credit abroad. His name has passed with lustre into other countries, and he yet lives and speaks among us by his excellent works.

Mr. Isaac Claude, after the decease of his father, published five octavo volumes, his posthumous works. The following treatise is part of the first volume. The second and third volumes contain a body of christian divinity. The fourth consists of theses, expositions of passages of scripture, and so on. The fifth contains letters on religion, and on various subjects. As three of these letters clear up an article in our church-history, which regards Mr. Claude, I cannot persuade myself to put a period to this account without endeavouring to place it in its true light.

In the year 1680, Dr. Stillingfleet, who had made himself known by publishing an oily book with a *nasty title,** and who afterward obtained the bishoprick of Worcester by another book affirming the right of bishops to vote in parliament in capital cases; he who pleaded for that odious tyrant Laud, and who thought Locke's essay dangerous

* A weapon-*salve* for the church's *wounds.* 1659.

to the faith ; Stillingfleet, I say, preached a sermon before the Lord Mayor on *the mischief of separation*, and became a *sower of discord* among brethren ! It was the price of perferment then. This was printed, and in it the dissenters were all condemned as schismaticks, and gravely advised not to complain of persecution. Owen, Baxter, Alsop, Howe and others, answered this seditious libel with great clearness and spirit. The priest, driven to distress, got Compton, Bishop of London, to write to Claude, LeMoyne, and other French presbyterians, for their opinion of English presbyterianism. They gave complaisant, but wary answers. These letters of French non-conformists were published by Stillingfleet as suffrages for episcopacy, and against non-conformity, and they were tacked to a book of his own about schism. There could not be a more glaring absurdity ; for no art can make that a crime at Dover, which is at the same time a virtue at Calais. Episcopacy and non-conformity rest on the same arguments in both kingdoms, and a man, who does not know this, is not fit to write on the controversy between non-conformists and episcopalians. Mr. Claude complained bitterly of this ungenerous treatment ; but the letters, that contained these complaints, were concealed till his death. Our historian, Neale, therefore, fell into the mistake of allowing, that the French presbyterians favoured English episcopacy ; but very properly adds, their suffrages, supposing them to be given against us, were of no

value in an argument, which was not to be determined by a majority of votes.*

After Mr. Claude's decease, his son printed the letters. In one to a Lady, who had sent him the bishop's packet, dated at Paris, April 16, 1681, he declares—that he was astonished to see his letter printed—that he wished to see christians united; but that he had written on the subject with great caution—that his chief design was to remove that calumny, which some had cast on them, charging them with denying the possibility of being *saved* in the episcopal church—that he had freely taxed the bishops with their severity—and that he had only expressed his desire of union in the form of a wish. All this is very different from a *justification* of episcopal tyranny. In another letter to Compton of the same date, he tells him—that he had received the book and his own letter; but he did not understand English enough to judge of them—that he never intended to have his letter printed—that, had Stillingfleet consulted him, he would not have agreed to the publication of it. "I am persuaded, adds he, you will not take it ill, if I say on your side, you ought to contribute all you can to an union with the non-conformists without a party spirit, and with all prudence and moderation. You, my lords the bishops, are blamed for your eagerness to persecute others by penal laws as if they were enemies. You are blamed for your church-government, which it is said, is as arbitra-

* *Hist. of Purit.*

ry and despotic over ministers as that of the popish prelates. You are complained of for not admitting any person to the ministry without making oath that episcopacy is of divine right, which is a cruel rack for conscience. You are complained of for requiring the ministers of other protestant churches to be re-ordained, when they come among you, while you admit others, ordained by popish prelates, to exercise their ministry without re-ordination. Your bishops are blamed for their rigid attachment to offensive ceremonies, for which they contend *tanquam pro aris et focis.* In the name of God, my Lord, endeavour to remove these grounds of complaint, if they be true; or, if they be not, clear yourselves, and let all Europe know, that there is nothing, which the glory of God, and the good of his church require of you, that you are not ready to do; for, allow me to tell you, it is not enough for your justification to affirm, that your own ministry is lawful, and that they, who separate from you, are guilty of schism; you must go on, and prove that you give no cause, no pretext for separation—that on the contrary you do all in your power to prevent it—and that, far from chafing and irritating people's minds, you endeavour by all gentle methods to conciliate them. I beg pardon, my Lord, if I have given too freely into the emotions of my own zeal, &c."

The case, then, is this. Episcopalians, not being able to maintain their cause by argument, endeavoured to do it by majority of votes. In order to procure these, they sent a false state of

the case to the French protestants. The French, as soon as they understood the true state of the case, complained of having been treated with duplicity, and declared against the bishops, and against the cause, which they were endeavouring to support.

Had Mr. Claude lived a hundred years longer, he would have seen now and then a Burnet and a Hoadly making a few feeble efforts to relieve conscience; but generally suspected, often abused, and always carried along the stream by a succession of Stillingfleets and Comptons. He would have seen a modest petition for freedom from penal laws, unaccompanied with any request for establishment, incorporation, perferment, or even the crumbs that fall from rectorial tables, rejected by English bishops. He would have been convinced, that it would be doing such men too much honour ever hereafter to ask their votes in favour of religious liberty, either in the dastardly fawning style of *free and candid disquisitions*, or in the nervous language of petitioning non-conformists, habituated to free inquiry at home, and frankness of expression abroad. In a word, he would have been more non-conformable than ever; he would have said with one of old, I WILL WALK AT LIBERTY, FOR I SEEK THY PRECEPTS: I WILL SPEAK OF THY TESTIMONIES ALSO BEFORE KINGS, AND WILL NOT BE ASHAMED. REMOVE FROM ME THE WAY OF LYING, AND GRACIOUSLY GRANT ME THY LAW!

FINIS.

A

BRIEF DISSERTATION,

ON THE

MINISTRATION of the DIVINE WORD;

BY

PUBLIC PREACHING.

Prefixed to a Translation of Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, Volume II.

[FIRST PRINTED, 1779.]

A

BRIEF DISSERTATION, &c.

PHILOSOPHERS love to contrast the religion of nature with that of revelation, and some of them ascribe superiority to the former. Christian ministers have much better reasons for ascribing it to the latter; and there are two, which deserve particular attention.

If we consider each as a body of *science*, and allow, revelation contains all the articles of information included in natural religion, and many more than the religion of nature ever knew, all necessary to the perfection of a system of theology, and all important to the felicity of man, it will follow, superior excellence belongs to revealed religion.

If we advert to *the mode of communication* peculiar to each, and grant, it is not enough in an universal religion to have a body of science, there must be also an easy method of imparting it, it will follow, superiority is due to revelation. Nature is a speechless beauty, silently waiting till depraved

man shall find leisure and inclination to be instructed by dumb signs; by signs, which even cultivated capacities find hard to understand, are not sure at any time they have understood at all, and never know when they have comprehended in the whole. Revelation is really and literally a voice, clear and expressive, speaking at sundry times, and in divers manners. Shall I call it the mouth of nature? The wisest say, it is the voice of God! It was first delivered in audible sounds by the Creator himself to our first parents, it has been since uttered in his name by prophets, then by his Son, and after him by inspired apostles; and it has been repeated, explained, and enforced by a succession of public preachers. By it, in all ages and countries, the ignorant have been informed, the indolent aroused, the profane placed before a tribunal of justice, and brought to genuine repentance, the penitent led to a throne of mercy, where pardon was proclaimed, the doubtful directed, the wavering confirmed, the timid emboldened, the distressed comforted. What school of philosophy has wrought effects so beneficial to mankind as these? As, therefore, we prefer revelation on every other account, so chiefly on this; its mode of tuition is all sufficient, and at the same time the simplest and easiest in the world. *The things, that you have heard among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

The argument for revelation, that arises from publick preaching, is defensible in every point of

view, and as it regards the bulk of mankind it has peculiar energy. Were we to allow, that natural religion was a science of God as perfect as that which revelation possesses, yet all the benefits of understanding it would be attainable by only such as should have capacity and leisure, accuracy of observation, and justness of reflection. The poor and illiterate, the busy, the dissipated, and the dejected, the sick and the aged, thoughtless till sickness and age overtake them, the vigorous youth, in his career of fancied pleasure, the wretched malefactor, whom a dungeon brings to feel the want of religion; all these, that is to say, the bulk of mankind, are deeply interested in a simple sort of system, which may be understood in a short time, and which, while it provides for the payment of all due honours to natural religion, makes provision also for plucking a criminal from the horrid jaws of yawning destruction. Such a system revelation is. In natural religion, it is the creator giving laws, the judge trying causes, and condemning criminals; and how cold is the consolation, that arises from these conjectures,—it is *possible* he may pardon the guilty, and it is *possible* I may be the man! In revelation, it is the good shepherd, traversing the wilderness in anxious pursuit of a lost sheep, that hears and knows the shepherd's voice. It is the tender father, all melting with compassion, and flowing with tears, calling to the prodigal beggar, his son, to return from penury to felicity, from the company of brutes to the bosom of God.

Best of beings! what delight to hear thy voice, even wrapped in the gloom of the darkest thicket, and wilfully buried in the blackness of impenetrable shade!

It will be objected, public preaching has been perverted: but it will be answered, as long as we have a standard it may be reformed to its original purity. The ark of Jehovah fell of old into the hands of heathens, who, having no dimensions or directions from the first artist, decorated it according to their own superstitious fancies, and in their great wisdom returned it to its owners, as if it had been a trunk of Dagon, accompanied with the glorious images of mice and morbid ulcers.*

Thus it has happened to all the ordinances of heaven. Prayer and preaching, baptism and the Lord's supper, have all fallen into the hands of bad men, and they have disguised and disgraced them: but what is reformation, and what is protestantism? Do they not include recovery and original purity? In regard to the pulpit, let us at least *try* to separate indelicate human baubles from original workmanship; and to place the ecclesiastical rostrum in that neat simplicity of finished taste, in which the divine artist first commanded it to be made. Plainness in religion is elegance, and popular perspicuity true magnificence.

The history of the pulpit is curious and enter-

* *The Philistines took the ark of God. : . But the Lord smote them with emerods. . . And they sent back the ark of God . : with five golden mice, and five golden emerods in a coffer.* 1 Sam. vi. 5, 6.

taining. It has spoken all languages, and in all sorts of style. It has partaken of all the customs of the schools, the theatres, and the courts of all the countries, where it has been erected. It has been a seat of wisdom and a sink of nonsense. It has been filled by the best and the worst of men. It has proved in some hands a trumpet of sedition, and in others a source of peace and consolation: but on a fair balance, collected from authentick history, there would appear no proportion between the benefits and the mischiefs, which mankind have derived from it, so much do the advantages of it preponderate! In a word, evangelical preaching has been, and yet continues to be reputed foolishness; but real wisdom, a wisdom and a power, by which it pleaseth God to save the souls of men.*

With views of this kind (I speak in the fear of God, who searcheth the heart,) and not to give offence to any, I collected and published the notes in the following essay. Alas! does a modern episcopalian undertake the defence of every absurdity exhibited to the world by every *thing* called in past times a bishop! Or shall a modern nonconformist adopt all the weaknesses of every one, who was persecuted out of established communities! All other orders of men examine and reform them-

* *The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. . . But it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe . . . because the foolishness of God is wiser than men.* 1 Cor. i.

selves; do men in black alone intend to render impropriety immutable and everlasting! I have exemplified the absurdities, complained of by Mr. Claude, by the works of our ancestors, who are dead and gone, on purpose to avoid offending. Indeed, this was *necessary*, for who alive has one pulpit impropriety to quote!

I designed at first to have added to these two a third volume of the same size, entitled, AN ESSAY TOWARD A HISTORY OF PUBLIC PREACHING. The matter was intended to be distributed into twenty dissertations, containing one with another twenty pages each, and entitled as follows:

I. The necessity of some divine revelation as a ground of divine worship.—II. The revelation given to Adam, compared with other pretended revelations.—III. The patriarchal state of preaching from Adam to Moses.—IV. The state of preaching from Moses to the captivity.—V. The state of preaching during the captivity.—VI. The state of publick tuition, from Ezra's time to the coming of Christ, both in Judea and other provinces.—VII. The state in which Christ placed preaching.—VIII. The pulpit-state during the lives of the apostles.—IX. The state of preaching during the first three centuries.—X. The state of preaching in the Greek church till the reformation.—XI. A view of the pulpit in the Latin church till the same period.—XII. The state of preaching in Britain, from the most remote antiquity; and in Europe at the time of the reformation.—XIII. The condition of publick instruction in England,

from the reformation till the death of Charles I. —XIV. The English pulpit during the civil war and the protectorate.—XV. A view of the pulpit from the accession of Charles II. to the revolution. —XVI. The pulpit in foreign churches, and in England, from the revolution to the end of the reign of George II.—XVII. The state of preaching among English, Danish, Popish, and other missionaries abroad, particularly in the East and West Indies.—XVIII. The present state of preaching in England among Roman catholicks, episcopalians, moravians, methodists, presbyterians, independents, baptists, quakers. &c.—XIX. Justification of those in all parties, who SIMPLIFY public preaching, by reducing it to its original standard of doctrine, language, aud other properties.—XX. Survey of the whole, tending to prove the free and simple preaching of the pure word of God a publick blessing to society, and the power of God to the salvation of men. This was the plan.

In pursuing this enchanting path, I found pleasure enough to repay all the labour of collecting many materials, and poring over books and manuscripts: but I found also, that justice could not be done to that part of the subject, which I wished most of all to illustrate, without a nearer residence to the grand repository of unexplored *British* subjects, the *Museum*, and more leisure than my publick avocations in my own congregation (for I have no colleague,) would allow me to expect. I have, therefore, laid aside the plan, made use of a few extracts in these notes, torn, burnt, and given away most of the other papers, and patterns of ser-

mons, that I had collected, and never more intend to resume the subject, except this once in the following brief sketch.

The first voice, that imparted religious ideas by discourse to fallen man, was the voice of the Creator, called by the inspired historian, *the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, in the cool of the day.* Whether he, who afterwards appeared so often in human shape, and at last actually put on a human body, descended into the garden, assumed a form, and conversed with our first parents on this occasion, or whether the air was so undulated by the power of God as to form articulate, audible sounds, certain it is, Adam and Eve literally heard a voice, and had the highest reason for accounting it the voice of God. The promise to the woman of a son, who should bruise the serpent's head, was emphatically and properly called THE WORD of God. It was a promise, which they had no right to expect; but, when revealed, the highest reason to embrace.

It is natural to suppose, God having once spoken to man, that mankind would retain, and repeat with punctuality what had been said, and listen after more. Accordingly, infallible records assure us, that, when men began to associate for the purpose of worshipping the Deity, Enoch prophesied.* We have a very short account of this prophet, and his doctrine: enough, however, to convince us, that he taught the principal truths of

* *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied.* Jude 14.

natural and the then revealed religion; the unity of God and his natural and moral perfections—the nature of virtue, and its essential difference from vice—a day of future impartial retribution. Conviction of sin was in his doctrine, and communion with God was exemplified in his conduct. He held communion with God by sacrifice, and St. Paul reasons, from his *testimony that he pleased God,* that he had faith in the promise of the mediator; for *without faith it* would have been *impossible* even for Enoch *to have pleased God.**

From the days of Enoch to the time of Moses each patriarch worshipped God with his family, probably several assembled at new moons, and alternately instructed the whole company. Noah was *a preacher of righteousness,* and by him, as an instrument, Christ by his spirit preached to the disobedient souls of men, imprisoned in ignorance and vice, and continued with great long suffering to do so all the while the ark was preparing. Abraham *commanded his houshold after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment;* and Jacob, when his house lapsed to idolatry, remonstrated against it, and exhorted them, and *all that were with him, to put away strange gods, and to go up with him to Bethel,* to that God, who had answered him in the day of his distress. In

* *Enoch said, the Lord cometh—Enoch said, the Lord cometh with his saints—ungodly sinners speak against him, and commit ungodly deeds—Enoch said, the Lord cometh to execute judgment —the Lord cometh to convince.* Jude 14, 15.—*Enoch walked with God.* Gen. v. 24. Heb. xi. 5, 6.

all these records of matters of fact, we perceive, short as they are, the same great leading truths, that were taught by Enoch, the general truths of natural religion, and along with them the peculiar principles of revelation. They saw *a heavenly country*, and were *mindful* of it, they had *sight* of a mediator, and were glad, and they had the *promise* of the appearance of him upon earth, which promise exercised their speculations, made a principal part of their publick informations, and they *all died in* the *faith* of its accomplishment. How charming upon a primitive mountain, beneath the shade of a venerable grove, must the voice of a Melchisideck have been, the father, the prince, and the priest of his people, now *publishing* to his attentive audience *good tidings of salvation, peace* between God and man, and then lifting up holy hands, and *calling upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God!* A few plain truths, proposed in simple style, addressed to the reason, and expounded by the feelings of mankind, enforced by nothing but fraternal argument, and example, animated by the Holy Spirit, and productive of genuine moral excellence, accompanied with sacrifices, comprised the whole system of patriarchal religion. Such was the venerable simplicity of hoary antiquity, before statesmen stole the ordinances of religion, and hungry hirelings were paid to debase them.

The scripture, speaking in general terms, says, by Moses came *the law:* but, strictly speaking, the religion, that Moses taught, contained two parts,

the one the *law*, that is, the religion of nature clearly explained in written precept, and terribly enforced by threatenings and penalties; the other the *gospel*, a promise of a mediator, and an exhibition of him in vicarious sacrifices; the latter assisted sense, the former required faith. The whole composed a fine body of religious science; it was like twilight, light in comparison with the night of past ages, and darkness in contrast with the succeeding day of the christian œconomy.

This great man had much at heart the promulgation of his doctrine; he directed it to be inscribed on pillars, to be transcribed in books, and to be taught both in publick and private by word of mouth. Himself set the example of each, and how he, and Aaron sermonized, we may see by several parts of his writings. The first discourse was *heard* with profound reverence and attention, the last was both uttered and received in raptures.

Publick preaching does not appear under this œconomy to have been attached to the priesthood; priests were not officially preachers, and we have innumerable instances of discourses delivered in religious assemblies by men of other tribes, besides that of Levi. *The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those, that published it.* Joshua was an Ephraimite; but, being *full of the spirit of wisdom*, he gathered the tribes to Shechem, and harangued the people of God. Solomon was a prince of the house of Judah, Amos a herdman of Tekoa, yet both were preachers, and one at least was a prophet.

Before Moses, revelation was short, and might safely be deposited in the memory: but when God saw fit to bless the church with the large and necessary additions of Moses, a book became necessary. This book was the standard, and they, who *spoke not according to this word,* were justly accounted to have *no light in them.* Hence the distinction between scriptural instructors, who taught according to the *law* and the *testimony,* and were called *Seers;* and fanciful declaimers, who uttered visions out of their own hearts, and were deemed *blind,* and thought to be in a *dream,* that is under deception.

The ignorant notions of pagans, the vices of their practice, and the idolatry of their pretended worship, were in some sad periods incorporated into the Jewish religion by the princes of that nation. Ordinances were instituted to serve secular purposes, and mercenary men were employed to give sanction to practices, which the religion of Moses forbad.

All the prophets, and all the seers protested against this apostacy, and they were persecuted for doing so. The apostacy became the established worship, and they, who adhered to the pure original standard, either fled their country, or concealed themselves, or lived under disgrace. First the ten tribes, forming the kingdom of Israel, revolted thus from God, and last the little kingdom of Judah, consisting of the other two tribes, followed their bad example. Before the defection of Judah, numerous refugees from Israel found sanc-

tuary in Judah: but after it, they were harrassed in both.

All this time the seers, as often as they could, preached against the crimes of their countrymen. Shemaiah preached to Rehoboam, the princes, and all the people at Jerusalem. Azariah and Hanani preached to Asa, and his army. Micaiah to Ahab. Some of them opened schools, or houses of instruction, and there to their *sons*, that is, *disciples*, taught the pure religion of Moses. At Naioth, in the suburbs of Ramah, there was one where Samuel dwelt, there was another at Jericho, and a third at Bethel, to which Elijah and Elisha often resorted. Thither the people went on Sabbath days, and at new moons, and received publick lessons of piety and morality. These schools were places of worship, in which prayer was offered to God, and the divine word taught to the people.

Through all this period, there was a dismal confusion of the useful ordinance of publick preaching. Sometimes they had *no open vision*, and *the word of the Lord was precious*, or scarce; the people heard it only now and then. At other times, they were left *without a teaching priest, and without law*. And at other seasons again, itinerants both princes, priests, and Levites, were sent through all the country to carry the book of the law, and to teach in the cities. In a word, preaching flourished when pure religion grew, and when the last decayed the first was suppressed.

The doctrines taught in this period, were chiefly these, the perfections of one God—the government of the whole universe by his providence—the moral obligations of men—the precepts of the law, and the penalties of disobedience—the depravity of man, and the necessity of renovation—the good tidings of salvation, the approach of a redeemer, and the necessity of faith, repentance, and universal obedience to him,—a state of future rewards and punishments,—and, in effect, the same gospel, that was afterwards more clearly revealed by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Moses had not appropriated preaching to any order of men; he had given a general command, *thou shalt teach the words of this law*, which was equal to saying, let it be taught. Persons, places, times, and manners, were all left open and discretional. Some of the discourses, which remain to us, are probably analyses, or abridgments of sermons, which were delivered at large. Many were preached in camps and courts, in streets, schools, cities, and villages, sometimes with great composure and coolness, at other times with vehement action and rapturous energy; sometimes in plain blunt style, adapted to the dregs of the people, at other times in all the magnificent pomp of Eastern allegory; and, on some occasions, the preachers appeared in publick with visible signs, with implements of war, yokes of slavery, or something adapted to their subject. They gave lectures on these, held them up to view, girded them on, broke them in pieces, rent their garments, rolled in the

dust, and endeavoured, by all the methods they could devise, agreeably to the customs of their country, to impress the minds of their auditors with the nature and importance of their doctrines; nor was it uncommon for the hearers to express their emotions during the delivery of the sermon. We had enthusiasts in England in the last century, who affected in the same manner a spirit of prophecy, and, in imitation of the ancient Jewish prophets, preached by signs; but they forgot they were not in the East.

The sermons of the old prophets often produced amazing effects, both in the principles and morals of the people. Single discourses, at some times, brought a whole nation to repentance, although at other times the greatest of them complained, *who hath believed our report? All day long we have stretched forth our hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people!* In the first case, they were in extacies, such was their benevolence; in the last, they retired in silence, and wept in secret places. Some in the first transports of passion execrated the day of their birth, and, when deliberation and calmness returned, committed themselves, their country, and their cause, to God.

These men were highly esteemed by the pious part of the nation; them they consulted in doubtful cases; to them they fled for consolation in distress, and them they sometimes loaded with benefits. The good Josiah, although he sometimes performed the office of reading the law in publick, and expounding it himself, yet kept one, who was

styled the *king's seer*, and others, who were scribes, and who read and expounded the law to him and his court. It had been common with his ancestors to do the same. Hence false prophets, bad men, who found it worth while to affect to be good, crowded the courts of princes. Jezebel an idolatress had four hundred prophets of Baal, and Ahab, a pretended worshipper of Jehovah, had as many pretended prophets of his own profession. These covered their want of principle, with an exterior like that of the true prophets, and even went beyond them; witness the frantick zeal of those, who publickly disputed with Elijah. By means of these deceivers, the faithful preachers of the divine word sunk into disgrace. *Zedekiah would not humble himself* when a *Jeremy spoke to him from the mouth of the Lord. The chief of the priests* imitated the prince, and *the people* them. *The God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending: but they mocked the messengers of God, despised his word, and misused his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord arose, and there was no remedy.* Into captivity, therefore, for seventy years, they were obliged to go.

The prophets, and good men, who were carried captive along with their countrymen, did not leave their religion behind them. In Babylon, where idolatry was established, they professed, and suffered for non-conformity, and assembled in private houses for the worship of God, and there the prophets availed themselves of the dispensation to

inculcate the principles of their religion, and to possess their fellow captives with a sincere aversion to idolatry. There, as their former preachers had foretold, being *allured into a wilderness*, and surrounded with *a hedge of thorns*, so that they could not return home, God *hewed them by his prophets, and slew them by the words of his mouth;* there he spoke home *to their hearts, took away the names of Baalim out of their mouths*, and taught them once more to call him *Ishi*, the being to whom they were in contract for obedience. To the success of preaching,and not to the smart of affliction, are we to attribute the remarkable reconversion of the Jews to the belief and worship of one God, a conversion that remains to this day. The Jews have since fallen into horrid crimes; but they have never since this period lapsed into idolatry.

The prophet Ezekiel was a man extraordinarily appointed to preach to the captives, and endowed with singular abilities for the execution of his office. He received his instructions in extacies, and he uttered them generally in rapturous vehemence. He had a *pleasant voice*, and the entire management of it; he could *play well on the instrument*, that is, he knew how to dispose his organs of speech so as to give energy by giving proper tone and accent to all he spoke. The people were as much charmed with his discourses as if they been odes set to musick; he was a *lovely song* in their ears, and they used to *say to one another, come, and let us hear what is the word, that cometh forth from the Lord.* The elders and the

people assembled at his house, and sat before him, and there, sometimes in the morning, and at other times in the evening, he delivered those sharp and pointed sermons, which are contained in his prophecy. One while he preached by signs, as the former prophets had done, another while he smote with his hand, and stamped with his foot, when he addressed them, trembling at their depravities, and weeping over their calamities. His writings contain the doctrines, which he taught; and the manner, in which he delivered them, is in all probability a pattern of the method employed by all the other preachers during the captivity.

It should seem, after the Jews had rejected the true prophets, they were punished with multitudes of publick preachers, pretending to a spirit of prophecy. These pests of society had art and address enough to insinuate themselves into favour, and to obtain popularity. They swarmed every where, and became the heaviest curse, that was ever inflicted on a guilty world. The prophets held them in the utmost abhorrence, and a great part of their ministry was addressed to unmask them. They described them by every odious image they could invent, and they pointed out in the clearest manner the dreadful consequences of their detestable hypocrisy.

These men were the mere creatures of those abandoned tyrants, who usurped the crown, and they were set up to assist their profligate creators in despoiling the people of their liberty and God of his glory. Religion was made an engine of state,

and these hirelings were appointed to work it. Jeroboam, the first manufacturer of these detested tools, made them of the national filth ; he in mere policy, took the basest and most depraved and unprincipled of the nation, and ordained them ministers of that motley religion, which he had set up to prevent the return of the ten tribes to the family of David. The king of Assyria, with views exactly similar, allowed the captives to perpetuate this vile race, and we find them in Babylon, described and execrated by Ezekiel.

The success of these bad men is chiefly to be ascribed to these four causes. First: they pretended a *divine right*, and said, the *Lord* saith so and so. They were too artful to profess the truth; that would have been, the *king* saith so and so, the lying spirit of the *devil* sent us to preach thus and thus: but here was a pretended reverence of God, and an acknowledgment of his authority. Secondly: they affected to *imitate* the true prophets, till they had obtained the popular plaudit, then they dropped them into obscurity, and sunk them into disgrace, and at last they turned the general odium over them, because they continued inflexibly upright, and could not be brought to mimick their betrayers. Thirdly: they framed their *doctrine* and deportment, not by the nature of God, and the dictates of his written word ; but, on the contrary, by the prevailing *passions* of the bulk of their auditors. Their study was to please, and they said and did whatever they thought would an-

swer that end. Fourthly: they were the constant *companions* of their admirers, and went with them into the perpetration of every crime. The true prophets were irksome or insipid to bad men; but these, these were chaplains exactly suited to their patrons; they could fast with Ahab, and feast with Jezebel.

According to those, who had the best opportunities of knowing them, their qualifications were mean and their dispositions wicked. Hence they are called *blind, ignorant, dumb* dogs, that *could* not bark;—*greedy* dogs, for their avarice, every one looking for his gain from his quarter;—*sleeping* dogs, for their indolence;—*drunkards*, saying, fetch wine, we will fill ourselves with strong drink, to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant;—*persecutors* when in prosperity, and *cowards* in adversity;—dogmatical *cavillers* about learning and religion, while they were destitute of decency, civility, and common sense;—*unprincipled* wretches, who, though they would not *shut a door in the temple*, or *kindle a fire on the altar* of God, their creator *for nought*, would protect, applaud, and canonize the greatest criminals for a *handful of barley*, and doom millions to destruction for a *piece of bread!*

When the seventy years of the captivity were expired, the captives were divided in their opinion about returning. Some traded and flourished in Babylon, and, having no faith in the divine promise, and too much confidence in their sordid guides, chose to live where idolatry was the estab-

lished religion, and despotism the soul of civil government. The good prophets and preachers, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai, and others, having confidence in the word of God, and aspiring after their natural, civil, and religious rights, endeavoured by all means to extricate themselves and their countrymen from that mortifying state, into which the crimes of their ancestors had brought them. They wept, fasted, prayed, preached, prophesied, and at length prevailed. The chief instruments were Nehemiah and Ezra ; the first was governor, and reformed their civil state, the last was a *scribe of the law of the God of heaven*, and addressed himself to ecclesiastical matters, in which he rendered the noblest service to his country, and to all posterity.

Ever since Moses had committed the revelations of God to writing, and had commanded the book to be transcribed, a great number of ingenious men, of several tribes, had taken up the profession of writing, and were called scribes. The five sacred books of Moses contained the genealogies of all the families of the nation, the body of jurisprudence that directed all their courts of law, the whole ritual of the church, and many other articles of necessary and daily use. The prophets since Moses had added to the inspired code, and by so doing had both increased knowledge, and the necessity of numberless scribes to diffuse it. The men, who thus employed themselves in transcri-

bing the inspired writings, were called scribes of the *law*.

The benefit of writing, and records, presently became obvious, and other scribes were soon employed about secular matters. There were under the judges many of the tribe of Zebulon, who *handled the pen of the writer*, scribes who kept records. There were afterward scribes of the *king*, that is, private secretaries; scribes of the *host*, that is, secretaries at war, or commissaries of the army; and the profession became very honourable and lucrative. This class of writers, I should call, for distinction sake, *secular* scribes.

Writing, reading, giving a sense of what is written, studying to find out a true sense to give, and proving and supporting the sense given, go together, and scribes naturally became studious, disputatious, and learned men. Ezra, the reformer of the church at the return from captivity, was the most eminent of his profession, a *ready scribe* in the law of his God.

This man laid the foundation of reformation in religious principle, and he rested religious principle on that infallible rock, the word of God. In order to lay a firm and good ground of this, he collected and collated manuscripts of the sacred writings, added a few explanatory lines, and a few anecdotes, (himself was inspired) and arranged and published the holy canon in its present form. To this he added a second work, as necessary as the former; he revived, and new modelled publick preaching, and exemplified his plan in his own per-

son. The Jews had almost lost in the seventy years captivity their original language; that was now become a dead language, and they spoke a jargon made up of their own language, and that of the Chaldeans, and other nations, with whom they had been confounded. Formerly preachers had only explained subjects; now they were obliged to explain words; words, which in the sacred code were become obsolete, equivocal, or dead.

Now also it became more necessary than ever to open houses for popular instruction in towns all over the country, after the pattern of the schools of the old prophets. Accordingly, houses were erected, not for ceremonial worship, as sacrificing, for this was confined to the temple; but for moral obedience, as praying, preaching, reading the law, divine worship, and social duties. These houses were called synagogues; the people repaired hither morning and evening for prayer; and on Sabbaths and festivals the law was read and expounded to them. It is with a great deal of justice, that learned men ascribe the following Jewish aversion to idolatry, and their attachment to the law, to constant publick preaching in their synagogues.

We have a short, but beautiful description of the manner of Ezra's first preaching. Upwards of fifty thousand people assembled in a street, or large square, near the Watergate. It was early in the morning of a Sabbath-day. A pulpit of wood, in the fashion of a small tower, was placed there on purpose for the teacher, and this turret was supported by a scaffold, or temporary gallery,

where, in a wing on the right hand of the pulpit, sat six of the principal preachers, and in another on the left seven. Thirteen other principal teachers, and many Levites, were present also, on scaffolds erected for the purpose, alternately to officiate. When Ezra ascended the pulpit, he produced and opened the book of the law, and the whole congregation instantly rose up from their seats, and stood. Then he offered up prayer and praise to God, the people bowing their heads, and worshipping the Lord with their faces to the ground; and at the close of the prayer with up-lifted hands they solemnly pronounced Amen, Amen. Then, all standing, Ezra, assisted at times by the Levites, *read the law distinctly, gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.* The sermons delivered so affected the hearers, that they wept excessively, and about noon the sorrow became so exuberant and immeasurable, that it was thought necessary by the governor, the preacher, and the Levites to restrain it. They, therefore, reminded the congregation—that a just grief might run into excess—that there was an incongruity between a festival and lamentation—and that on this festival, there were singular causes of extraordinary joy; they were delivered from captivity, the law was restored, and they, the very poorest of them, had been made by the pains of the preachers to understand it. *Go your way,* said they, *eat the fat—drink the sweet—send portions unto them, for whom nothing is prepared.*—Be not discouraged—religious joy is a people's strength. The wise and

benevolent sentiments of these noble souls were imbibed by the whole congregation, and fifty thousand troubled hearts were calmed in an instant. Home *they returned to eat, to drink, to send portions, and to make mirth, because they had understood the words, that were declared unto him.* Plato was alive at this time, teaching dull philosophy to cold academicks; but what was he, and what was Xenophon, or Demosthenes, or any of the pagan orators, in comparison with these men!

From this period to that of the appearance of Jesus Christ, publick preaching was universal, synagoges were multiplied; there were thirteen in his time at Tiberias, and at Jerusalem, they say, four hundred. In the latter number most likely are included proseuchas, or small places for private prayer.

The great concourse of people who attended the service at the synagogues, and the manifest utility of publick instruction, rendered some sort of order necessary. A small assembly, therefore, was formed of the wisest and most intelligent of the priests and scribes; these were a council, called elders, and the president was named ruler of the synagogue. The rulers sometimes preached sermon-wise, at other times instructed the people by way of question and answer, and at all times directed who should speak and preach in the synagogue.

The scribes were in their meridian glory in the time of Ezra. He and his colleagues were truly great men, and their expositions of holy scripture were remembered long after their decease, and

quoted by their successors. Had successive scribes quoted their comments, as comments, all had been well; but they alledged them as *law*, and gave them as much authority as the text itself. This was setting a dangerous snare for eager disputants, more intent on gaining their argument than on investigating the truth, and into this temptation the whole nation fell. Hence came the national attachment to the traditions of the elders, and hence the invention and propagation of traditions, never heard of by the elders. Hence sects arose, and hence, in the end, that *inefficiency* of the divine word, of which our Lord complained; for, where scripture is not allowed to operate as *law*, it is, in strictness of speech, of *no* effect.

All the sects in the Jewish church ran the same fate as else where; they rose in weakness, and ended in wickedness. A silly, superstitious, weak enthusiast is the natural founder of a sect, and a bold villain is the usual supporter of it. The first proselytes are in earnest, the last are knaves.

It would carry us too far from our subject, were we to particularize the rise, the history, the opinions, and the ruin of Samaritans, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and other religious parties in Judea. They are in general pretty well known, and the New Testament gives us a general idea of the doctrines held by all except the Essenes, who were a kind of recluses, Jewish monks. It is sufficient to observe, each party preached, both in Jerusalem, and in all other parts of Jewry; and, when the calamities of their own country, or the prosperity

of other places, induced them to quit their native soil, and to settle elsewhere, they built synagogues, or met in private houses, where, on Sabbath days and festivals, they worshipped God, and preaching was always a part of their service.* It is not necessary to give patterns of their sermons here, or to describe their manner of delivering them. In general, we may remember, the Jews in this period were better known than their ancestors had been to the Western world, and they themselves travelled into other countries more. They had therefore dropped many of the ruder ways of speaking used by the old prophets, and had adopted the more sedate and polished methods of publick speakers in pagan schools, and senates, and courts of law. This art, imported into the church, makes sleepy sermons for the dog-days. Happy for them, had they rested here: but alas! they embraced popular errors, and pagan vices, and incorporated both into the religion of Moses, so that in the reign of Herod, who was a creature of the emperor Augustus, the Jewish church was sunk to a level with pagan temples, and all were considered as engines of state. Inferior churchmen were in subjection to the high priest, and the high priest himself was an officer of the crown. It is easy to guess what preaching they had.

In those days appeared that singular preacher, John the Baptist. He was extraordinarily com-

* Phil. Jud. de Sept. et Fest.—Buxtorfii Synagog.—Wagenseil Tel. Ing.—Vitring. Synagog.—Alting. Heptat. Tom. v. Diss. 2.

missioned from heaven to announce the advent of the promised Messiah, and he adopted the plan formerly used by Ezra, appealing by publick preaching to the common sense of mankind. He took Elijah for his model, and, as the times were very much like those, in which that prophet lived, he chose a doctrine and a method very much resembling those of that venerable man. His subjects were few, plain, and important, repentance was the chief. His style was vehement, his images were bold and well placed, his deportment was solemn, his action eager, and his morals severe. The people flocked in great multitudes after him, and surrounded him with a popularity, of which his enemies were afraid. He fell, however, a sacrifice to female revenge at a tyrant's drunken bout, where despotism gave whatever prostitution required. Jesus Christ had been openly introduced by John to the knowledge and affection of the people, and at John's death Jesus appeared in public as a preacher. Before his ministerial labours began, and preparatory to them, he had that vision recorded in the first eleven verses of the fourth chapter of Matthew, a vision, as one of our ministers has most beautifully shewn, excellently adapted to the time and purpose.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ had been long expected to appear in the Jewish church, as *a prophet like unto Moses*, and his ministry had been characterized, as the most beneficial, that could be imagined.

* Rev. Hugh Farmer.

The people, therefore, formed the highest expectations of his œconomy, and he framed it so as to exceed all description. *He taught · · · · not as the scribes.*

First: instead of *deriving* his doctrine from popular notions, human passions, the interests of princes, or the traditions of priests, he took it immediately from the holy scriptures, to which he constantly appealed. The truths of natural religion he explained and established ; the doctrines of revelation he expounded, elucidated, and enforced, and thus brought life and immortality to *light* by the gospel.

Next: the *doctrines* which he taught, were all plain facts:—God is a spirit—God sent his son into the world, that the world through him might be saved—Moses wrote of me—He that believeth on him, that sent me, is passed from death unto life—The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God—The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment—The righteous shall go into life eternal—My kingdom is not of this world—The merciful are happy—Happy are the pure in heart—Few find the narrow way, that leadeth to life—Many go in at the wide gate, that leadeth to destruction.—All these, and many more of the same kind, are facts, plain and true, and they were the simple truths which Jesus Christ chose to teach.

Thirdly : the *motives*, which he employed to give his doctrine energy, were not taken from sinful secular things ; but it was urged home in its truth and importance. This fact is *true* and THERE-

FORE you ought to believe it, whether the world admit it or not. That duty is *important* to your health, to your property, to your comfort, to your salvation, to your pleasing God, and, THEREFORE you ought to perform it, whether the world perform it or not.

The *tempers*, in which he executed his ministry, were the noblest, that can be conceived. He was humble, compassionate, firm, disinterested, and generous. He displayed, in all the course of his ministry, such an assortment of properties as obliged some of his auditors to burst into exclamatory admiration, *blessed are the paps, which thou hast sucked!* others to hang upon his lips, wondering at *the gracious words, that proceeded out of his mouth*, and all to acknowledge, *never man spake like this man!* This was not a temporary tide of popularity, it was admiration founded on reason, and all ages since have admired and exclaimed in like manner.

Add to these, the simplicity and majesty of his style, the beauty of his images, the alternate softness and severity of his address, the choice of his subjects, the gracefulness of his deportment, the indefatigableness of his zeal ..... where shall I put the period? his perfections are inexhaustible, and our admiration is everlasting. The character of Christ is the best book a preacher can study.

In order to mortify human vanity, to convince the world that religion was a plain simple thing, and that a little common sense accompanied with

an honest good heart was sufficient to propagate it, without any aid derived from the cabinets of princes, or the schools of human science, he took twelve poor illiterate men into his company, admitted them to an intimacy with himself, and, after he had kept them a while in tuition, sent them to preach the good tidings of salvation to their countrymen. A while after he sent seventy more, andthe discourses, which he delivered to each class at their ordination, are made up of the most wise and benevolent sentiments, that ever fell from the mouth of man. All the topicks are pure theology, and all unpolluted with puerile conceits, human politicks, literary dreams, ecclesiastical traditions, party disputes, and all the other disgraces of preaching, which those sanctimonious hypocrites, scribes and pharisees, and pretended doctors and rabbies had introduced into it.

Jesus Christ had never paid any regard to the *place*, where he delivered his sermons; he had taught in the temple, the synagogues, publick walks, and private houses ; he had preached on mountains, and in barges and ships. His missionaries imitated him, and convenience for the time was consecration of the place. He had been equally indifferent to the *posture;* he stood, or sat, as his own ease and the popular edification required. The *time* also had been accommodated to the same end. He had preached early in the morning, late in the evening, on sabbath days and festivals, and whenever else the people had leisure and inclination to hear. It had been foretold, the

Messiah should *not lift up, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets;* that is, should not use the artifices of those who sought for popularity. It should seem, Jesus Christ used very little action; but that little was just, natural, grave, and expressive. He sometimes wept, and always felt; but he never expressed his emotions in a theatrical manner, much less did he preach as a drowsy pedant declaims, who has no emotions to express.

The success, that accompanied the ministry of our Emanuel, was truly astonishing. My soul overflows with joy, my eyes with tears of pleasure, while I transcribe it. When this Sun of righteousness arose with healing under his wings, the disinterested populace, who lay all neglected and forlorn, benighted with ignorance and benumbed with vice, saw the light, and hailed the brightness of its rising. Up they sprang, and after him in multitudes men, women, and children went. Was he to pass a road, they climbed the trees to see him, yea the blind sat by the way side to hear him go by. Was he in a house, they unroofed the building to come at him. As if they could never get near enough to hear the soft accents of his voice, they pressed, they crouded, they trod upon one another to surround him. When he retired into the wilderness, they thought him another Moses, and would have made him a king. It was the finest thing they could think of. He, greater than the greatest monarch, despised worldly grandeur; but to fulfil prophecy, sitting upon a borrowed ass's colt, rode into Jerusalem

the Son of the Highest, and allowed the transported multitude to strew the way with garments and branches, and to arouse the insensible metropolis by acclamations, the very children shouting, *Hosannah ! Hosannah in the highest ! Hosannah to the son of David ! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord !*

The Rabbies pretended, the populace *knew not the law, and were cursed ;* and it is certain they knew not those *glosses* of the law, which traditionists affected to teach ; but this ignorance was their happiness. It would have been well for the teachers, had they never known them. The populace did know the *law,* and often quoted it in its true sense. What mystery is there in the ten commandments ! or what erudition is requisite to determine, whether he, who opened the eyes of the blind, were a worshipper of God, or a sinner ! It is a high privilege of poverty, that it is a state *degagé*, disengaged, detached, unbiassed, and nearest of all others to *free inquiry.* The populace are not worth poisoning by ecclesiastical quacks, for they cannot pay for the drugs. Their senses of seeing and hearing, their faculties of observing, reflecting, and reasoning, are all as equal to *religious* topicks as those of their superiors, and more so, because unsophisticated. If they apply themselves to examine, their attestation is a high degree of probability, if not a demonstration. It was gloriously said by a blind beggar to a bench of curmudgeons, *Why ! herein is a marvellous thing, that ye*, with all your great books and broad phylacteries, long

titles and hard names, wise looks and academical habits, *know not whence Jesus is, and yet he hath opened my eyes. Now we*, blind beggars, we cursed people, who know not the law, we who are altogether born in sin, we *know that God heareth not sinners* · · · · *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

This popularity, obtained by publick preaching, supported by a course of beneficent actions, many of which were miraculous, excited the envy of the leading churchmen, and they determined to destroy Jesus. They dared not appeal to the people, his constant auditors and companions; but they pretended loyalty to Cæsar, and love to their country, and taxed the PRINCE OF PEACE with *stirring up sedition.* We know the issue. Let us draw a vail over this horrid part of the history of mankind, and let us pass on to the principal object of our attention.

Jesus Christ taught no secrets, and he had commanded his apostles to publish upon the house tops what they had heard in private conversation. He charged them not to decline the publick preaching of the divine word after his death; but to preach it to every creature. He promised them extraordinary assistance for this extraordinary work, and he fulfilled his promise, and exceeded their expectations, about six weeks after his crucifixion.

The birth, life, doctrine, example, miracles, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; made a large addition to the old subjects of preach-

ing. The old œconomy was a rude delineation, the new was a finished piece. It was no new doctrine, it was an old plan brought to perfection, and set in finished excellence to last for ever. It was the religion of love to God and man, made obvious and universal.

Christ, in the course of his ministry, had likened publick preaching to a concert of musick, the grave deep tones of John the baptist were all in perfect harmony with the soft and lively airs of his successors; a method of instruction contemned by the partial, but justified by the sons of true wisdom. Agreeably to this notion, he gave the holy Spirit so as to form a variety of perfect preachers, each excelling in his own sphere. James and John were *sons of thunder.* Barnabas was a *son of consolation.* Peter was formed to preach to Jews, and Paul to convict and convert Gentiles. By this admirable œconomy *the wolf dwelt with the lamb, the leopard lay down with the kid, the calf, the young lion, and the fatling* associated *together, and a little child* might have *led them.* Assuredly they, who have made themselves standards of excellence, and have required of all others uniformity to themselves, have neither understood the world of nature nor the œconomy of redemption.

The apostles exactly copied their divine master. They confined their attention to religion, and left the schools to dispute, and politicians to intrigue. Their doctrines were a set of facts of two sorts. The first were within every man's observa-

tion, and they appealed for the truth of them to common sense and experience. The others were facts, which from their nature could be known only by testimony. To the truth of these they bore witness, and avowed the credibility of their evidence. The first required reasoning, the last faith. These doctrines they supported entirely by evidence, and neither had, nor required, such assistance as human laws or worldly policy, the eloquence of the schools or the terror of arms, the charms of money or the tricks of tradesmen could afford them. Their gospel was a simple tale, that any honest man might tell. As to all the circumstantials of publick preaching, time, place, gesture, style, habits, and so on, it was their glory to hold these indifferent, and to be governed in their choice by a supreme attention to general edification.

Great was the success of these venerable men. Their services were highly acceptable to God, to whom they were *a sweet savour of Christ ;* they diffused the knowledge of him in *every place,* and made them *always triumph in Christ :* he *opened doors,* into which they entered, and *preached Christ's gospel.* They formed multitudes of religious societies, called churches, and they had the pleasure of seeing them choose from among themselves, honest and able men to preach the divine word, and to administer the standing ordinances of Jesus Christ, in the absence, and after the death of the apostles. These were called *bishops,* inspectors, or *seers,* as the old prophets were, and he, who wants to be informed that this primitive brother was

not a lord in lawn, wants at the same time to be told, that if a child want *bread* his parent should not give him a *stone*, if he wish for *fish*, he should not be mortified with a *scorpion*.

The high esteem, in which christians held the apostles, excited the envy of bad men, and they presently poured themselves into christian churches to share the benefits. These acted over again the part of the old false prophets, and they were treated by the apostles as the true prophets had treated the former impostors. They foresaw, however, and foretold, that men of this sort, after their decease, would prostitute religion to worldly purposes, and associate the spirit of the devil with the profession of christianity. They knew the weakness of some pious men, and the desperate projects of the wicked. They remembered the state of the Mosaical œconomy, and they recollected the prophecies of their divine master. They, therefore, apprized succeeding christians of their danger, by describing the men, by directing the servants of Christ to adhere to the written word, and whenever apostates should arrive at power enough to set up ANOTHER STANDARD OF FAITH AND MANNERS, to withdraw from them.* They assured them, they would be persecuted; but they charged them to stand firmly in christian liberty, and to hold fast

* *These* things teach. . . . If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of *our Lord Jesus Christ* . . from such WITHDRAW thyself. 1 Tim. vi. 3. 6. 2 Thess. iii. 6.

both the FAITH and the PROFESSION of it, and they promised them the presence, the blessing, and the support of God. They never so much as hinted that the church might let itself to the state, that any had a right to give laws to conscience, to appoint ceremonies of divine worship, and to enforce both by penal sanctions; but considering Christ as having *finished* his religious plan, charged their successors to *keep what they had committed to their trust unspotted and unrebukeable until the second appearing of Jesus Christ.* The longest liver of these inspired men described in bold allegorical style, like that of the old prophets, the nature and duration of the apostacy, and closed the holy canon by threatening all, who should increase or diminish the divine word.

Here we are arrived at that part of the history of publick preaching, at which a consistent christian, especially an uniform protestant, ought to pause, in order to form a just notion of the perfection of the pulpit. Here we have the whole of the revealed will of God, the whole body of christian science; consequently a perfect preacher, whatever opinions and doctrines he may hereafter meet with in the future history of preaching, will think himself *thoroughly furnished unto every good work,* although he disbelieve them all. Future preachers may be counsel on different sides of questions, which may arise; but not a soul of them may give law. No mortal may hereafter ascend an eminence, and say, you have heard the gospel say so and so; but I say the direct contrary.

Here we have all the genuine motives and supports of the sacred system; truth supported by reason and argument, christian institutes maintained by motives pure and christian like themselves; consequently, a perfect preacher, how zealous soever he may be to propagate christianity, will not think himself authorized either to exchange these motives for others of a secular kind, or to incorporate these, which have been tried and found to be *mighty through God to bring every thought into obedience to Christ*, with such as support civil states and trading companies. Should future history shew him a set of men rising up in the church, and procuring from kings charters to empower them to trade in divinity, and assigning them a set of opinions as a company's stock to traffick with, he would not think himself obliged to pawn his soul to raise a sum, that might enable him to buy in and traffick too.

Here, in the doctrine of CHRIST, is *all* the message, and in the example of CHRIST the only *right* manner of delivering it. Passion may think the system wants heat—pride may imagine it wants ornaments—blind zeal may suppose it wants power—the voluptuous may say it is not pleasure—black robes may declare it is not learned—long robes may vow it is not law—there may be found coxcombs or lunaticks, who may deny it even common sense—yea knaves or idiots may take heart and call it a cheat—but what says the cool consistent christian? What have thousands of such men said? Why they have surveyed the christian

religion, neat as it came out of the hands of its divine creator, Christ the Lord of this new world, and proclaimed, *Behold! it is very good! Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge! Give glory to God!* Revealed religion resembles the natural world; each came from the same wisdom, and each is analogous to the other, *perfect and entire, and lacking nothing.*

The apostles being dead, every thing came to pass exactly as they had foretold. The whole christian system underwent a miserable change, preaching shared the fate of other institutions, and this glory of the primitive church was turned into a lie. The degeneracy, however, was not immediate, it was slow and gradual, and brought on by degrees, just as a modest youth becomes a profligate man.

Before any man takes up the writings of those uninspired authors, whom we call FATHERS, it would be well to read St. Luke's introduction to his gospel. *Many have taken in hand to set forth ··a declaration of those things, which are most surely believed among us····but it seemed good to me·· having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus.* It seems, the love of writing, and of becoming authors early possessed some good christians, who had NOT *a perfect* understanding of the subjects, of which they wrote. "We certainly believe the principal articles, which they declare; but not as *they* declare them. I write that thou mayest *know the*

certainty of those things; for they describe them so as to render them doubtful." We take no notice of the force of the original terms; it is plain, this is the general meaning of the Evangelist.

Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, and other fathers nearest the times of the apostles were writers of this kind. Clement of Alexandria was a very good man, he preached to the church, and taught school, and his *miscellanies* may fairly stand for a pattern of the whole; christianity is there:* but how sadly mixed and mismatched with pagan philosophy and Jewish allegory, the thunders of an apostle with the squibs of an enthusiast! The partiality of a scholar for his tutor, the love of a proselyte for his casuist, and a thousand other incidents may have preserved old letters and papers, which charity would have buried in oblivion, into which, in all probability, the manly works of some primitive bishops have sunk.

Some wished to convert pagan philosophers, they, therefore, philosophized too, and proved Moses and Christ, by Sophocles and Plato. Others longed for Jewish proselytes; the Jews loved allegory; christianity then was allegorized. Some endeavoured to convert the pagan populace; the populace loved finery; the ceremonies of christianity, then, were adorned. Others hoped to recommend religion to gentry; the pulpit, then, was set by the laws of the theatre, went by the rhetorick of Aristotle, and was known to be good by

* Στρωματα.

keeping time with the maxims of Tully. This was a degradation of the wisdom of God unworthy of men, who sincerely believed the spirituality and divinity of the word of God. With these premonitions, we look into the churches after the death of the apostles.

It must be allowed, in general, that the simplicity of christianity was maintained, though under gradual decay, during the first three centuries. Christians assembled on the first day of the week for publick worship. Prayer was offered to the Deity in the name of Jesus Christ. Psalms and hymns were sung in the praise of God the creator, the preserver, and redeemer of men. The sacred writings were read. The word of God was preached, its doctrines explained, and its duties enforced. The ignorant were classed in societies and instructed. They, who understood the doctrine of Christ, were admitted members of the church by baptism on their own profession of faith and repentance. The death of Christ was commemorated as he had appointed. The churches, having no other support, rested wholly upon religious principle, and the chief attention of the bishops and teachers was to disseminate that; consequently, publick preaching was frequent, plain, popular, and powerful; and although there are many exceptions, especially among the Origenists, yet during this period christianity made a rapid and extensive progress, and its success was wholly owing to instruction supported by argument and example.

The next five centuries produced many pious and excellent preachers, both in the Latin and Greek churches. The doctrine, however, continued to degenerate, and the pulpit, along with all other institutes, degenerated with it. It is impossible, in this sketch, to investigate particulars: we will just take a cursory general view.

The Greek pulpit was adorned with some eloquent orators. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea, John Chrysostom, preacher at Antioch, and afterwards patriarch (as he was called) of Constantinople, and Gregory Nazianzen, who all flourished in the fourth century, seem to have led the fashion of preaching in the Greek church. Jerom and Augustine did the same in the Latin church. Had the excellencies only of these great men been imitated by their contemporaries and successors, the imitators would have been competent orators, but very far from able ministers of the New Testament; but their very defects were adopted as pulpit endowments.

The Greeks called sermons *Homilies*, that is, publick discourses spoken to the *common people.** The Latins named them at first *tracts*, or treatises; that is, publick discourses in which subjects were stated, argued, and thoroughly *discussed;* afterward they called them sermons, or *speeches;* perhaps some sermons were nothing more!†

* Ομιλια ab ομιλος multitudo-vulgus-plebs.

† August. *Tractatus* in Joan.—Gaudent. Brixiens. Episc. *Tractatus* varii..— —Victor utic. Lib. i.——Vincent. Lerin. c. xl.

Preaching was not originally assigned to any particular order of men; but in this period the pulpit was thought worth inclosing, and monopolizers were ready to rent and improve it. Jesus Christ was of the tribe *of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood:* yet it *was his custom* to read and expound in a synagogue every Sabbath day. When *Paul and Barnabas went into the synagogue at Antioch on the Sabbath day and sat down, after the reading of the law and the prophets,* THE RULERS *of the synagogue sent* to intreat them to preach, with which complaisant invitation Paul instantly complied. When christian assemblies first met, *all,* who had ability, might preach one by one. Yea, the very women under both œconomies prophesied, that is, uttered in publick the highest sort of instruction by preaching. The latter was prohibited by the apostle of the Gentiles for excellent reasons; but it is yet supposed by some christians to have been only a local or temporary prohibition. Let me have the honour of saying one word here, by way of apology for the preaching part of the fair sex. They revere the authority of St. Paul; but they understand him, with some expositors, in that sense, which best agrees with their inclination to please the other sex by chatting. They say, gentlemen in lawns and gowns and hoods, and rings and roses and trinkets, clad in the attire, and displaying the delicacy of ladies in the pulpit, excited in them a strong prejudice in favour of female claim. They say, a congregation consisting of twelve frequently

contains ten of their sex, and where an unpensioned majority is for them, who shall be against them! Beside, they are provoked to speak, for they are wearied with listening year after year to what is not worth hearing. They add, they are able at all adventures, to put a priest in petticoats to the blush, by contrasting their usurpations with his, as, for example, their harmless pulpit lectures with his grave definitions and investigations, begun with a religious oath, and finished with a canonical curse. We have prated, say they, but never persecuted; tattled nonsense, but shed no human blood: beside, to make a lady head of the church, and yet deny the sex the liberty of preaching to the members, is genuine rectified spirit of mystery.

To return. For some time preaching was common to bishops, elders, deacons, and private brethren in the primitive church: in process, it was restrained to the bishop, and to such as he should appoint. They called the appointment ordination, and at last attached I know not what ideas of mystery and influence to the word, and of dominion to the bishop, who pronounced it. The word *ordain* was originally equal to *appoint*, and if twenty christians nominated a man to instruct them once, the man was appointed or ordained a preacher for the time. If they requested him to continue to instruct them, he was reputed to be ordained or appointed their minister in future, as long as they pleased. These nominations were accompanied with prayer, and sometimes with the blessing and

good wishes of the seniors, expressed by the old custom of laying the hand upon the head. From these simple transactions came in process of time a longer train of absurdities than I have room to relate.*

When a bishop or preacher travelled, he claimed no authority to exercise the duties of his function, unless he were invited by the churches, where he attended publick worship. The primitive churches had no idea of a bishop at Rome presuming to dictate to a congregation in Africa. Nothing, however, was more common than such friendly visits and sermons as were then in practice. The churches thought them edifying. In case the bishop were sick, or absent, one of the deacons, † or sometimes a short-hand writer used to read a homily, that had been preached, and perhaps published by some good minister, and sometimes a homily, that had been preached by the bishop of the church.‡

We have great obligations to primitive notaries, for they very early addressed themselves to take down the homilies of publick preachers. Sometimes the hearers employed them, sometimes the

* Orig. Hom. i. in Psal. 37.—Hieron. Epist. ad. Nep.—Chrisost. Hom. De incompreh. Deo. De Anathem. adv. Judæos.—Euseb. Hist. lib. vi. c. 19.—See Acts vi. 5, &c. xxi. 8.

† Communio peregrina. Albaspin. Obs. Ecclesiast. l. i. 3.—Euseb.—v. 23.—Constit. Apol. l. ii. 62.

‡ *Synod. Valens. Can.* iv. Si quis episcopus, vel. presbyter ob infirmitatem ipse prædicare non possit, a *diaconis* in ecclesia homiliæ patrum recitentur.—Assistenti plebi est per *notarium* expositio recitata. *Greg. M. in prolog. Homil.*

preachers, and sometimes themselves. For this purpose they carried writing tablets waxed, and styles, that is, pointed irons, or gravers, into the assembly, and stood round the preacher to record what he said. It was a character to a publick speaker to be attended by these scribes; for primitive christians, never complaisant in matters of conscience, would not give themselves the trouble of taking down the sermons of a patriarch, if they did not like his preaching. They say no body would write after Atticus, patriarch of Constantinople; for, though he had a great name, he was accounted but an indifferent preacher. The people thought once hearing enough of all conscience for a bad sermon. From the labours of these men, we derive many a huge folio.*

What a multitude of not impertinent questions might be asked here! Can we ascertain the motives of all these writers?—Can we tell which are corrected copies?—Is it quite fair to determine the whole character of a preacher by one extempore effusion?—Were none of the writers in a hurry to get his own copy first to market, and are the most quick always the most correct?—Are we sure the preacher spoke clearly, and had no hoarseness, no cold, no impediment? Can we answer for the writer's quick hearing, or the people's silence? Fathers have been quoted as scripture; but scripture was not taken thus. They have been

* Euseb. lib. vi. 22.—Gaudent. Brix. Tractatus (xvii.) quem *quorundam civium* notarii exceperunt.—Sozom. Hist. L. viii. 27.—August. Serm. vi. de sanctis.

alledged in proof of every thing, and well they might! If the populace then resembled the populace now, the most nonsensical sermons were the most saleable.

The deacons placed themselves round the pulpit, and before sermon one of them cried with a loud voice, *silence—hearken*—or something similar. This was repeated often, if necessary; I suppose at proper pauses, when the preacher stopped.* Their manners were different from ours; but really our manners want some of their customs. It might do some drowsy folks good to be alarmed every five or ten minutes with—*mind what you are about—let us listen—attend to the word of God.*

Some affirm, that all the primitive bishops preached in a gown, or a surplice, or a something, which Eusebius calls, πέλαλον, and which he says, St. John being a priest wore. Had St. John thought πέλαλον necessary to a good sermon, he would have left in his writings some direction how God, who enjoined it, chose to have it made. The directions of Moses for the habits of Aaron are so plain, that any habit-maker could work by them to this day: but as for the apostle's πέλαλον, we know nothing about it. Eusebius picked up a scrap of a letter of one Polycrates, there he found πέλαλον, and there we leave it. It is not improbable, that some good preachers might not have cloaths fit to appear in, especially the itinerant brethren, such as the apostles, and others after them, who travelled and

* Chrysost. Hom: Act. xix.——Clem. Constit. Apol. viii. 15.

preached. Would it be wonderful, if a congregation had kept a decent clean habit, that would cover all, for the use of such poor men as came among them! The surplice was copied from the Jewish worship, and was ordered to be worn by all, who officiated in sacred things; but this was in the latter part of this period, when preachers were become priests in name, and princes in fact.

The fathers differed much in pulpit action, the greater part used very moderate and sober gesture. Paul of Samoseta used to stamp with his foot, and strike his thigh with his hand, and throw himself into violent agitations: but he was blamed for it by his contemporaries.* They thought his action theatrical, and improper in a church; and yet in every church the people were allowed and even exhorted to applaud the preacher by shouting and clapping their hands at the close of a period, as at the theatre, or in the forum. The first preachers delivered their sermons all extempore, and they studied, while they preached, the countenances of their auditors, to see whether the doctrine were understood. The people endeavoured to express their sentiments, most likely at first by a look, a nod, a shake of the head, or a lifting of the hand. At length this rose up to loud acclamations and clappings; and the preachers perceiving the abuse preached it down.†

* Euseb. vii. 29.

† Jer. ad. Nep. 2. Aug. Civ. Dei. l. iv. c. 16. 24. Chrysost. Hom. in Act. xxxviii. In Act. iii. Ad pop. Ant xxxviii.

Paul of Samoseta used to scold at the people, when they did not shout and applaud him. It happened often their applause was no praise. They applauded what they did not understand. Austin one day proposed a question to himself to answer in preaching. The answer might have deserved applause had he given it; but the congregation fell a shouting at the question, before they knew whether he could answer it properly · · · · *Hey-day*— said he—*what are you praising? . . Do ye know what I was saying? . . I only proposed a question, and you go to clapping and shouting!* Jerom tells us, he once asked his tutor, Gregory Nazianzen, what St. Luke meant by δευτεροπρωτον, (*the second sabbath after the first.* Luke vi, 1.) Gregory replied, *I will tell you to-morrow, when I am preaching in the church. When all the congregation are shouting and clapping their hands, you will be obliged to profess to understand what I say, though you do not comprehend it, for if you do not clap your hands and shout too, they will all condemn you for a fool.**

Sermons in those days were all in the vulgar tongue. The Greeks preached in Greek, the Latins in Latin, for the preachers meant to be understood. They did not preach by the clock (so to speak,) but were short or long as they saw occasion. Augustine used to leave off when the people's hearts seemed properly affected with the subject. He judged of this sometimes by their shouting, and at other times by their tears. Their ser-

* Hieron. ad Nep. 2.

mons were usually about an hour long; but many of them may be deliberately pronounced in half an hour, and several in less time.*

Sermons were generally both preached and heard standing; but sometimes both speaker and auditors sat, especially the aged and infirm. Their methods were on some occasions what we call expounding from several verses, on others preaching from a single passage. In many things they imitated the Jews, by adapting parts of scripture to particular seasons, and hence in time came the appointment of select portions for Easter, Whitsuntide, and other festivals. The Jews read in their synagogues Ruth at Pentecost, Ecclesiastes at the feast of Tabernacles, and Solomon's song at the Passover. The fathers were fond of allegory, for Origen, that everlasting allegorizer, had set them the example. I hope they had better proofs of the canonicalness of Solomon's song than I have had the pleasure of seeing. In general, their sermons were paraphrastical, regular and textual, going from psalm to psalm, from chapter to chapter, through whole books; but they made no scruple, when occasion offered, to defer the regular subject, and to choose a text on the spot, suited to any case, that happened even after they were in the assembly, yea after they had ascended the pulpit, and even after they had read the text.† It should seem, the preacher either held the holy scripture

* S. Basil. Orat. in St. Bapt. † Chrysost. apud Socrat. lib. vi. cap. 3. August. de Civ. Dei, xxii. 8.

in his hand, or had it lying before him on the desk. Before preaching he usually went into a vestry to pray, and afterward to speak to such as came to salute him. He prayed with his eyes shut in the pulpit immediately before preaching, and often in difficult parts of his sermon while he delivered it. The first word the preacher uttered to the people when he ascended the pulpit was—*Peace be with you*, or *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all*, to which the assembly at first added *Amen*, and in after times they answered, *and with thy spirit*.

Most of the sermons of these days are divisible into three general parts. The first is a short introduction, the second an exposition of the text, and the last a moral exhortation arising out of the discussion. After sermon the speaker descended, and prayed at the communion table, on which the good people laid their alms for the poor. Funeral sermons were frequent, and, through the imprudent use of rhetorical figures, hurtful in the issue to the doctrine of pure christianity. Some bishops preached every day during lent, some twice a day, others twice a week. Some delivered evening lectures, and all preached on the Lord's day, the first day of the week.

In this period many noble places of worship were built. The old jewish temple was the original, the rest were all taken from it. We have felt the misery of abridging all along; but here it will be less obscure to omit than to abridge. Let it then suffice to observe, that a cathedral was an

imitation of the temple, and a village place of worship of a synagogue. Hence the idea of a holy end for an altar and a circle of priests, and an unhallowed end for the common people. Hence the divisions of porches, choirs, chancels, and so on, answering to the courts of the temple. The *ambo*, or pulpit, was in the choir. Some were portable, and very plain; others fixtures, stretching out lengthwise, so that the preacher might walk up and down in them ; some had seats and curtains, others were adorned with gold and silver, and resembled the thrones of princes more than scaffolds for the convenience of christian ministers. So says Eusebius, censuring the vanity of Paul of Samoseta. Hence came our modern cathedrals and parish churches, our choirs and altars, and stalls, and thrones in places of worship. Many of our churches and chapels are very inconvenient to preach in. They were not erected for schools of instruction, but for saying mass and sacrificing, and where the pulpit should be, there stands an old table covered with finery, and called an altar. In many places, the priest preaches from the middle of a side wall, or a pillar, to the backs and shoulders of his audience, for the pews were placed with a view to the altar, where formerly brother *Mumpsimus* used to play tricks, and not to the pulpit, where now a wise and good minister stands and preaches to a people ; in search it should seem by their looking to the old spot, for their former guides. How long shall we sacrifice manly advantages to puerile popish baubles !

Degenerate as these days were, compared with those of the apostles, they were golden ages in comparison with the times that followed. Some taught what they called *positive theology*, that is to say, compilations of theological opinions collected from scripture, and fathers, and councils. Others went into *scholastical divinity*, that is, confused and metaphysical reasonings, by which they pretended to explain the doctrines of religion. A third sort were all taken up with contemplations and inward feelings, and their divinity was *mysticism*. Even these were preferable to others, who read the categories of Aristotle, or the life of a saint, in the church, instead of a sermon, and who turned the church, I will not say into a theatre, but into a booth at a country fair. The pulpit became a stage, where ludicrous priests obtained the vulgar laugh by the lowest kind of dirty wit, especially at the festivals of Christmas and Easter. One of our old historians says, *The devil was so pleased with the preachers of the eleventh century, that he sent them a letter of thanks from hell for the advantages which his kingdom derived from their pulpits.**

Were I to attempt a history of any one christian ordinance, as of singing, prayer, preaching, baptism, and so on, I would take the old testament history of the *church* for my model. The true church of God is the object in contemplation, this is followed from family to family, from country to country, through Egypt, Babylon, Israel, and Judah. The ten tribes, called Israel, go off at a

* Guliel. Malmsburiens. lib. iii. 9.

certain period, and are absolutely lost to all future historians. The sacred writers were not compiling a history of *Israel*, but a history of the *religion* in Israel; and when Israel apostatized, the historians left them, and followed religion. On this principle, I should quit the beaten road of what is called *church* history, and should go into the histories of Paulicians, Albigenses, Waldenses, Beghards, and other reputed hereticks under persecution, and there perhaps I might find what I sought, the *ordinance* in question in its native purity. Popes, and councils, and secular churchmen, should only appear incidentally, just as Amelekites and other troops of banditti in jewish history, coming up at harvest time to rob the good people of their corn.* What care I where apostates hold a council, or who presides there, or what they quarrel about? What is it to me who ordained this superstition, or who introduced that? All may be entertaining and curious; but it is not a history of *the church*. Modern papists consider the reformation as a heresy and a schism, and with much greater reason may we consider their corporation in the same light.

To apply this to our subject. Suppose we were writing an accurate history of the ministration of *the divine word* by publick preaching, we should trace the subject till we came to a period where legends, politicks, and superstitions were publickly

* Judges vi. *So it was, when Israel had sown, . . that the children of the east came up against them, . . they and their camels without number, . . and destroyed the increase of the earth, . . and left no sustenance for Israe .*

preached. Should we continue to pursue the domineering party, we should be obliged to write a history, then, of the publick preaching of *errors;* but we ought to be writing a history of preaching *the divine word,* and consequently our plan would oblige us to go off with the people, who continued to preach it after it was discarded.

This track is more necessary in a history of *preaching* to be pursued, than in a history of baptism, or any other single ordinance; for the *word* of God was originally given for a standard of faith and practice: where this standard has been preserved, there faith and practice have been in general kept pure, and where other standards have been set up, although some one ordinance may have been preserved pure, (which by the way has not been the cese) yet it must have been an accidental, and not a constitutional purity, and so of little value to purity, and of none to the history of it. Pulpits are publick tell-tales, and a senseless tale they tell, when they are the mouth of a faction! A collection and repetition of these tales is not a history of *the ministration of* THE DIVINE WORD.

All our divines affirm, all our historians prove, and the church of Rome does not deny, that there have been from the days of the apostles various DISSENTERS from all established corporations called churches. They have been loaded with innumerable calumnies, recorded under odious names, taxed with holding detestable errors, and branded with publick infamy; but, at the reformation, these dissenters were traced, brought out

of obscurity, washed and new clothed, and produced as evidences upon the trial of the question, *Where was your church before Luther?*

I have seen enough to convince me, that the present English dissenters, contending for the sufficiency of scripture, and for primitive christian liberty to judge of its meaning, may be traced back in authentick manuscripts to the nonconformists, to the puritans, to the Lollards, to the Vallenses, to the Albigenses, and I suspect through the Paulicians, and others to the Apostles. These churches had sometimes a clandestine existence, and at other times a visible, I wish I could say a legal one; but at all times they held more truth, and less error than the prevailing factions, that persecuted them. One branch uniformly denied the baptism of infants, all allowed christian liberty, and all were enemies to an established hierarchy reigning over the consciences of their brethren. I have now before me a manuscript register of Gray, bishop of Ely, which proves, that in the year 1457, there was a congregation of this sort in this village, Chesterton, where I live, who privately assembled for divine worship, and had preachers of their own, who taught them the very doctrine, which now we preach. Six of them were accused of heresy before the tyrant of the district, and condemned to abjure heresy, and to do penance, half naked, with a faggot at their backs, and a taper in their hands, in the publick market places of Ely, and Cambridge, and in the church-yard of Great Swaffham. It was pity the poor souls were forced to abjure the twelfth arti-

cle of their accusation, in which they are said to have affirmed, *All priests, and people in orders, are incarnate devils!**

A hundred such instances may be produced, a thousand curious anecdotes of the manners of our ancestors, of their language, books, utensils, habits, reasoning, and rhetorick, might incidentally furnish amusement and instruction to us, and nothing would be found easier to industry, than to connect their ecclesiastical œconomy with that of the above-mentioned antelutheran protestants. We are far from justifying their mistakes and approving in the gross; but we know popish records are everlasting calumnies, and the history of the *christian* pulpit is among the people whom they calumniate.

I see a thousand benefits arising to religion at large from the pursuit of this method, and I will venture to name one. It is generally allowed, that toleration is a high excellence in a system of civil polity, and that christian liberty in the church is analogous to it; but it is almost as generally supposed, that our ancestors were all ignorant of it, and that Sidney, Milton, Locke, and others of our late philosophers and statesmen, first inculcated these laws of humanity, and incorporated what we have of them into our modern constitutions. What if we could prove, that Jesus Christ,

* Art. XII. Item, quod papa est antichristus, et sacerdotes sunt ejus discipuli, et omnes ordinati sunt diaboli incarnati.—XI. Item, quod extrema unctio, anglice *gresyng*, minime proficit.—III. Item, quod puer . . . nec egeat, nec baptizari debeat. &c &c.—*Reg. Eliens. Gul. Gray. MSS.*

whose profession was theology, taught the doctrine of christian liberty, and that he only taught in a clearer manner what had from the days of Enoch been held and taught in the primitive pulpits! What if we could prove, that from the days of the apostles, the most tolerant of mankind, the doctrine had been actually believed, taught and exemplified in every age till the reformation! What if we could prove, that the generous toleration of modern states was only the doctrine of christian liberty applied to secular affairs, and stood exactly in the same predicament in a treatise of government, as natural religion stands in a system of modern theology, that is, a first principle of human felicity, discoverable by reason, but elucidated and improved by revelation! What if we could ascertain by good records, that difference in religious sentiments and practices made no difference in civil rights and mutual esteem among whole sects and parties! What if we could shew, that religious uniformity was an illegitimate brat of the mother of harlots, and nothing akin to the Son of God! What if we could infer····Prosperity and peace be with any investigator! Alas! I must quit reveries, and go this afternoon to visit the sick, and preach in the evening to a part of my flock.

Before I go, however, I will finish this article by a remark, which will prove, I think, that this is not all reverie. The thirteenth article, objected against the forementioned Chesterton culprits by the bishop, in his consistory at Downham, is this. "Also, you affirm, that every man may be called a

church of God, so that if any one of you should be summoned before his ecclesiastical judge, and should happen to be asked this question, do you believe in the church? he may safely answer, he does, meaning that he believes in the church, because he believes the church is in every man, who is a temple of God."* Now is not this affirming, that every good man was bound to follow his own judgment in religious matters, and not to be set down by the opinions of a domineering faction, calling themselves, *the church?* Is a man strong for being called Samson, or wise for naming himself Solomon? Does it not mean, that every man had as much right of judging in himself solely as the whole community had collectively? We could go further, and prove that these six men, although all in one community, did not all hold the same articles, some agreed to one, some to another, but they *all*, the register says, affirmed this *thirteenth* article. Does not this prove that their ecclesiastical œconomy allowed *christian liberty*, and that they held a *mixt* communion?....But I must go.

To return. The glorious reformation was the offspring of preaching, by which mankind were informed, there was a standard, and the religion of the times was put to trial by it. The avidity of the common people to read scripture, and to hear

* Item, quod quilibet homo dicitur eccla Dei, adeo quod si quanquam illorum coram judice ecclesiastico evocatum ad hanc questionem respondere contingeret, an in eccla credis, tute tunc respondere posset quod sic, per hoc intelligens, quod in eccla credit, quia in homine qui est templum Dei.

MSS. Ubi supra.

it expounded, was wonderful, and the papists were so fully convinced of the benefit of frequent publick instruction, that they, who were justly called *unpreaching prelates*, and whose pulpits, to use an expression of Latimer, had been *bells without clappers* for many a long year, were obliged for shame to set up regular preaching again.

The church of Rome has produced some great preachers, since the reformation; but not equal to the reformed preachers; and a question naturally arises here, which it would be unpardonable to pass over in silence, concerning the singular *effect* of the preaching of the reformed, which was general, national, universal reformation.

In the darkest times of popery there had arisen now and then some famous popular preachers, who had zealously inveighed against the vices of their times, and whose sermons had produced sudden and amazing effects on their auditors; but all these effects had died away with the preachers, who produced them, and all things had gone back into the old state. Law, learning, commerce, society at large had not been improved. Here a new scene opens, preachers arise less popular, perhaps less indefatigable and exemplary, their sermons produce less striking immediate effects, and yet their auditors go away and agree by whole nations to reform.

Jerom Savonarola, Jerom Narni, Capistran, Connecte, and many others had produced by their sermons great immediate efforts. When Connecte preached, the ladies lowered their head-dresses, and committed quilled caps by hundreds to the

flames. When Narni taught the populace in Lent from the pulpits of Rome, half the city went from his sermons crying along the streets, *Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us,* so that in only one passion week two thousand crowns worth of ropes were sold to make scourges with; and when he preached before the pope to cardinals and bishops, and painted the crime of non-residence in its own colours, he frightened thirty or forty bishops, who heard him, instantly home to their dioceses. In the pulpit of the university of Salamanca he induced eight hundred students to quit all worldly prospects of honour, riches, and pleasure, and to become penitents in divers monasteries. Some of this class were martyrs too. We know the fate of Savonarola, and more might be added; but all lamented the momentary duration of the effects produced by their labours. Narni himself was so disgusted with his office, that he renounced preaching, and shut himself up in his cell to mourn over his irreclaimable contemporaries, for bishops went back to court, and rope-makers lay idle again.

Our reformers taught all the good doctrines, which had been taught by these men, and they added two or three more, by which they laid the ax to the root of apostacy, and produced *general* reformation. Instead of appealing to popes, and canons, and founders, and fathers, they only quoted them, and referred their auditors to the holy scriptures for *law*. Pope Leo X. did not know this, when he told Prierio, who complained of Luther's heresy, *Friar Martin had a fine genius!*

They also taught the people what little they knew of *christian liberty*, and so led them into a belief that they might follow their *own* ideas in religion without the consent of a confessor, a diocesan, a pope, or a council. They went further, and laid the stress of all religion on *justifying faith.* This obliged the people to get acquainted with Christ the object of their faith, and thus they were led into the knowledge of a character altogether different from what they saw in their old guides, a character, which it is impossible to know, and not to admire and imitate. The old papal popular sermons had gone off like a charge of gunpowder, producing only a fright, a bustle, and a black face; but those of the *newe learninge*, as the monks called them, were small hearty seeds, which, being sown in the honest hearts of the multitude, and watered with the dew of heaven, softly vegetated, and imperceptibly unfolded blossoms and fruits of inestimable value.

These eminent servants of Christ excelled in various talents, both in the pulpit, and in private. Knox came down like a thunder-storm, Calvin resembled a whole day's set rain, Beza was a shower of the softest dew. Old Latimer in a coarse frieze gown trudged a foot, his testament hanging at one end of his leathern girdle, and his spectacles at the other, and without ceremony instructed the people in rustic style from a hollow tree; while the courtly Ridley in sattin and fur taught the same principles in the cathedral of the metropolis. Cranmer, though a timorous man, ventured to give the most powerful and lascivious tyrant of his

time a new testament with the label, *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;* while Knox, who said, *there was nothing in the pleasant face of a lady to affray him,* assured the Queen of Scots, that, " if there were any spark of the spirit of God, yea of honesty or wisdom in her, she would not be offended with his affirming in his sermons, that the diversions of her court were diabolical crimes, evidences of impiety or insanity." These men were not all accomplished scholars; but they all gave proof enough, that they were honest, hearty, and disinterested in the cause of religion; and to these, and not to literary qualifications, all were indebted for popularity in the pulpit, and publick confidence out of it. Happy had it been for succeeding ages had they been trusted less.

All Europe produced great and excellent preachers, and some of the more studious and sedate reduced their art of publick preaching to a system, and taught rules of a good sermon. Bishop Wilkins enumerated in 1646 upwards of sixty, who had written on the subject. I have endeavoured to procure a sight of all their books; but some few I have not been so happy as to find. Several of what I have seen are valuable treatises, full of edifying instructions; most of them are very small; but all, I think, are on a scale too large, and by affecting to treat of the whole office of a minister, leave that capital branch, public preaching, unfinished and vague.

One of the most important articles of pulpit science, that, which gives life and energy to all

the rest, and without which all the rest are nothing but a vain parade, is either neglected or exploded in all these treatises. It is essential to the ministration of the divine word by publick preaching, that preachers be allowed to form principles of their own, and that their sermons contain their real sentiments; the fruits of their own intense thought and meditation. Preaching cannot be in a good state, in those communities, where the shameful traffick of buying and selling manuscript sermons is carried on. Moreover, all the animating encouragements, that arise from a free unbiassed choice of the people, and from their uncontaminated disinterested applause, should be left open to stimulate a generous youth to excel. Command a man to utter what he has no inclination to propagate, and what he does not even believe, threaten him at the same time with all the miseries of life, if he dare to follow his own ideas, and to promulge his own sentiments, and you pass a sentence of death on all he says. He does declaim, but all is languid and cold, and he lays his system out as an undertaker does the dead. Instead of referring him to those, who deal most in religion, and therefore best understand the value of every thing in it, the people I mean, give him to understand, that even their consent to be taught by him is not necessary to be obtained, and you instantly turn his eye from his bible, his people, and his God, and fix it on the seat of a patron, who must be approached by a circle of collusion and intrigue.

These books consider the pulpit as the religious tribunal of the civil magistrate, preachers as servants of the crown, and preaching as a human art, a branch of rhetorick to be taught in the schools. In one thing they made it different from all other arts and sciences; these they considered as capable of improvement; but that they pretended was in a state of absolute perfection. Other sciences they left open, and would have laughed at a proposal to admit every future youth to study philosophy by swearing him to believe and maintain the ideas of Plato, to live in the faith and to die in the comfort of the speculations of Cicero, or the categories of Aristotle; but this science, religion, this, they said, an inhuman reprobate had begun, a sickly child improved, and a female tyrant completely finished off.* This was going beyond a Cæsar, who thought *nihil actum dum aliquid agendum*, yea beyond an apostle, who exclaimed to his followers, *leaving rudiments let us go on unto perfection. Brethren, be ye followers of me. I count not myself to have apprehended: but this only have I attained, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things, which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

This is the place, where, would our limits allow it, we should take our stand, and reconnoitre

* "Tu Elisabetha operi ab Henrico parenti felicitur *inchoato*, ab Edwardo fratre in immensum *aucto*, coronidem jam consummato imponeres. . . Pater *incepit* . . . . adolescens *promovit* . . . filia *absolvit*." *Epist. Synod. Elizabet. Reg. Dat. Sueæ ex Frisiorum oppido, ex Synodo 22 Aprilis* 1587. *Fris. occid.*

the reformed pulpit; but it shall suffice to observe, that in all reformed countries the pulpit was taken into the service of the state, and became a kind of attorney or solicitor general retained to plead for the crown. The proof of this lies in the articles, canons and injunctions, which were girded on the clergy of those times; and how thoroughly the state clergy have understood this to be the true condition of the pulpit, their sermons will abundantly prove. The best state instructions to preachers were given in the DIRECTORY by the assembly of divines; but even these include the great, the fatal error, the subjection of God's word to human law. If, when all other institutes were taken into the service of the state, the pulpit had escaped, it would have been wonderful indeed: but, if the pulpit be a *place*, and the preacher a *pensioner*, in the name of common sense, what are we to expect from both!

From this sad constitution we derive the lifelessness of later preaching. The ill fated youth before he is aware finds himself bound to teach the opinions of a set of ministers, who lived two hundred years before he was born. His masters believed their own articles, and therefore preached them with zeal; but it would be unreasonable to expect a like zeal in him for the same doctrines, for he does not know what they are, or, having examined them, he does not think them true, and thus subscription to other men's creeds becomes the death of good preaching.

With these principles I went about the follow-

ing work, and for these reasons I have all through endeavoured to possess the mind of the candidate for the pulpit, with an abhorrence of dominion over conscience, and to excite him to enter into that religious liberty of thinking and acting, with which christianity hath made him free.

There were at the reformation a great number of wise and good men, who thought the revival of primitive christianity only begun at that period, and they endeavoured, though under great disadvantages, to inprove these beginnings, and to go on unto perfection. Others have succeeded them, and entered into their pious views with disinterestedness and success. Among these the English protestant dissenters stand first in merit; and, as their congregations are constitutionally in possesion of christian liberty, they have produced some of the greatest preachers in the world. It would be easy to give a long list of names from the dawn of the reformation to this day: but I sacrifice the pleasure of doing so to the modesty of my friends. This, however, I will venture to say, and *no man shall stop me of this boasting*, we have in our churches now exact copies of our ancient models. *The prophets, do they live for ever?* Yes, they do! *The spirit of Elijah rest upon Elisha!* The grave solidity of Cartwright and Jacob seemed to reside in Owens and Goodwins and Gills. The vivacity of Watts and Bradbury and Earle lives in others, whom I dare *not* name. The patient laborious Fox, the silver Bates, the melting Baxter, the piercing Mead, the generous Williams, the instructive Henry, the soft and candid Doddridge;

Ridgley, and Gale, and Bunyan, and Burgess, in all their variegated beauties yet flourish in our pulpits, exercising their different talents for mutual edification. We have Barnabas the son of consolation, and Boanerges the thunderer still. Ye servants of the most high God, who shew unto us the way of salvation! *Peace be within the walls* of your churches, *and prosperity within your* . . . . . dwelling houses . . . You have no *palaces*, you need none, palaces can add nothing to you.

It would have been easy to have exemplied all the good rules of Mr. Claude from the printed discourses of these great men; but I have quoted very few of the sermons of our late ministers, and I think none of theirs, who are now alive. I would not willingly give a moment's pain to the modesty of persons, whom I so sincerely esteem. If I have at any time exemplified a fault exploded by Mr. Claude by a quotation from the sermons of men of great name in other communities, I hope, admirers of the preachers censured will believe me, when I assure them, I have taken a great deal of pains to avoid giving offence on this head. I have exemplified many pulpit vices from obscure preachers of no note, when I could have done it from the sermons of their popular contemporaries, who led for the time the pulpit fashion. The few examples I have given are none in comparison with the many I have left unnoticed.

Some of our brethren will complain that the notes are not all in *English*, and my reply is this —First, the *substance* of all is in English—Second-

ly, some must *not* be translated—Thirdly, most of these were intended for small exercises for studious *lads*, hoping they might be hereby allured to study the pulpit before they entered it—And lastly, if these be not sufficient reasons, I promise to make the complainant a present, if he will call for it, of a beautiful copper plate print of the old man, his son, and the ass, on condition he will get the rhymes at the bottom by heart.

Seriously, were I to follow the dictates of my own heart, I should throw myself at the feet of the meanest of my brethren, and beg pardon for presuming to seem to instruct those, who are appointed to instruct others, and who have so often edified me. I would confess, I saw innumerable errors in this work, for all which I could make only one apology, that is, that they were involuntary. I ask no pardon for expressing my abhorrence of intolerance. Always when I met it in a course of reading, I thought I met the great devil; and my resentment was never abated by his appearing in the habit of a holy man of God. I have sometimes allowed myself a little mirth in that awful science religion, and in the presence of that grave thing called a sermon: but *in this thing the Lord pardon his servant, that when my master went into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaned on my hand, and I bowed myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bowed myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon his servant in this thing!*

FINIS.

[END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.]

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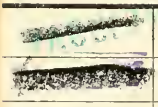

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